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KOINONIA

THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY GRADUATE FORUM

ANNUAL FORUM 2003

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LIBERATION THEOLOGY, MARTYRDOM, AND THE PROPHETIC
DIMENSION OF THEOLOGY

MATTHEW D. LUNDBERG

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MORALITY AND MEANING IN A TIME OF TERROR:

A REVIEW ESSAY

SCOTT R. PAETH

BOOK REVIEWS

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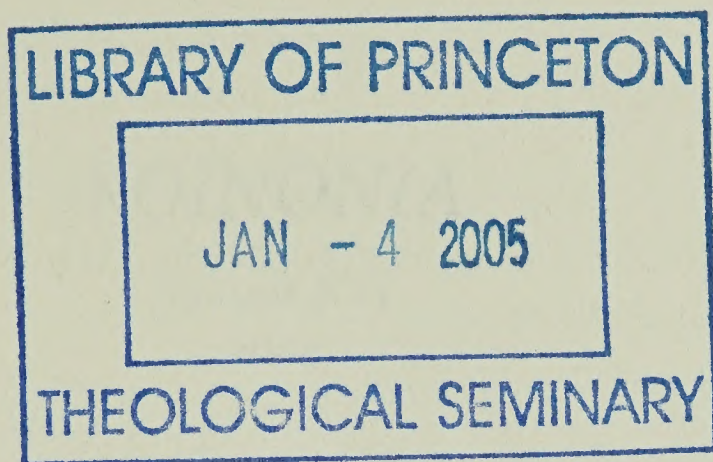
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Editorial:

Multireligious and Multicultural Conversation in Christian Academic Institutions

KOINONIA produces a journal and annual forum sponsored by a Christian seminary – one that is explicit about its rootedness within a particular, Reformed stream of biblical interpretation, theology, and ecclesiology. We have always sought after and published work by students in programs with no religious affiliation and those in programs with affiliations with other religious traditions. My thoughts on the role of multireligious and multidisciplinary conversation in Christian schools have been inspired, in part, by consideration of the recent convocation address of Princeton Theological Seminary's new president, Iain R. Torrance. In this address he voiced his hopes and dreams for the seminary in light of the work of Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth since 1991.

I was intrigued by President Torrance's decision to construct his first official address to the seminary community around the scholarship of a nonChristian religious leader. And my curiosity was piqued by his hints as to what he sees as "the founding charism of this school".

Torrance's decision caught my attention in part because *KOINONIA*'s editorial board members had, a year earlier, decided to invite two nonUS student-scholars – who had been nurtured within two different nonChristian religious traditions – to serve as panelists for our annual forum on the topic: "The Prophetic Dimension of Martyrdom in the 21st Century." Princeton Seminary's systematic theology student Matthew Lundberg delivered the central paper entitled: "The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of Life: Liberation Theology, Martyrdom, and the Prophetic Dimension of Theology". Lundberg's essay, these two nonChristian responses, and the responses of three other Princeton Seminary students compose the forum section of this issue.

During our board's discussion about whom to invite for this forum's panel, some serious issues were raised by our book review editor, Ron Choong, and our practical theology editor, Ajit Prasad, about the way in which the mission of *KOINONIA* fits into the overall mission of Princeton Seminary. Both Choong and Prasad are citizens of nations in which Christians are a small

minority. They asked us to give careful thought to the question: "To what ends, and in what ways, should scholars in an explicitly Christian school engage explicitly nonChristian religious perspectives?" We considered how to avoid making decisions that could appear to be motivated by political correctness, and to create, instead, the space for the deeper listening and riskier speech that, I believe, God's Spirit uses to enlarge the perspectives of both listener and speaker – so both can perceive possibilities for positive individual and social transformation that were unimaginable prior to such vulnerability.

We thus provided more contexts for conversation. Instead of rooming at the seminary's guesthouse, our nonPrinceton participants stayed with my family, where in lieu of the formal seminary dinner, we enjoyed a longer (and louder) evening for panelists and board members. We scheduled a breakfast attended not only by panelists and board members but by quite a few Princeton Seminary and University doctoral students. Despite accumulating snow, several of us accepted Choong's impromptu invitation to his home for lunch, where the conversation continued.

Many of Torrance's reflections upon Sack's work could give future *KOINONIA* boards, and scholars in other schools with a faith affiliation, some guidance in pondering methods of multireligious conversation. I will summarize three of these remarks especially pertinent to *KOINONIA*'s experience with this issue's forum, and reframe them as recommendations.

1) *Become bilingual. Master the skills of both "narrowcasting" (addressing one's own group via tribal language) and "broadcasting" (addressing groups outside one's "tribe" via public discourse).*¹

Pushpa Iyer, a panelist from India pursuing a PhD in conflict analysis and resolution, pointed out repeatedly that *KOINONIA* had failed to clarify whether the goal of our forum was Christian theological analysis of a Christian theological proposal, or public analysis and public amelioration of public horrors. Our journal needs to decide if our forums will be "tribal" or "public" – or if we should alternate between the two in different years. If future forums involve multireligious conversation, our calls for papers must specify more clearly that submissions must work as public discourse. This does not mean eliminating references to ethical or other absolutes derived from the speci-

¹ Torrance, Iain R. "Convocation Address: Princeton Theological Seminary 14th September 2004." www.ptsem.edu/know/Convocation04.htm (29 Sept. 2004): 1-2.

ficity of a Christian or other religious perspective. But it does mean taking on the discipline of noting repeatedly to oneself and to one's audience the particularity of the source of such absolutes.

2) Adopt "a different way of understanding what we hold in common and what we acknowledge as being different."² Practice the "exorcism" of "the notion . . . that there is a single truth . . . that is unreachable but objective . . . [so] that it follows that if I am right, then you are wrong."³

Torrance notes that Sacks links this call for "exorcising Plato's ghost" with a "a plea for space . . . where people can meet on equal terms."⁴ Although arguing for the immense importance of such space, Torrance sees it as "nothing like enough,"⁵ and suggests that another argument Sacks proposes – that "the supreme religious challenge is to see God's image in one who is not in our image,"⁶ – holds more power for limiting the potentially destructive aspects of tribalism. Torrance describes Christian ethics as being about the alignment of grace and truth, and about the resulting transformations which he connects with forgiveness, which can create "a kind of moral space or discontinuity so as to enable a new beginning."⁷

Panelist Santiago Slabodsky, an Argentine liberationist rabbi, reminded us that both Christian and Jewish tribalism have resulted in martyrdoms (variously conceived) of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. By taking the risk of reinterpreting both Jewish history, authoritative Jewish texts, and current Israeli politics in the light of church history and Christian theology, Slabodsky found areas of overlap in terms of "substantive ethical perspectives"⁸ in both Christian and Jewish theological traditions. His critique of some strands of Zionism reveals what I see as an often misconstrued, misused, and dangerous type of "single truth" theory: the justification of violent defense of territorial, economic, or other hegemonic claims by an appeal to divine truth. His paper demonstrates that exorcising that kind of single, objective truth need not involve opening oneself to seven new demons of moral relativism, nor

² Torrance, "Convocation," 3.

³ Torrance, "Convocation," 3.

⁴ Torrance, "Convocation," 3.

⁵ Torrance, "Convocation," 4.

⁶ Torrance, "Convocation," 4, citing Jonathan Sack's *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilization* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 60.

⁷ Torrance, "Convocation," 3.

⁸ Torrance, "Convocation," 2.

cutting oneself off from the texts of one's tradition. At the end of his address he exhorted us all to be guided by "the first agreement": the right to disagree – and by an awareness of "the collaboration of 'the Other' in our own constructions."

3) *Be "unwilling to take refuge in relativity, trying instead to distinguish between that which is absolute and that which is universal."*⁹ *But realize that, "Appeals to universals are of little help to us in today's world. . . . [T]hey are too thin to nurture resolve. . . ."*¹⁰

Appeals to universals provide little motivational nourishment if the only absolute behind them is a shared commitment to relativism. But it is harder, of course, to discover and appeal to ethical common ground between the differing sets of absolutes which two (or more) religious perspectives claim as their guidelines for action. This is especially difficult given the diversity among ethical absolutes actually adhered to by the immensely varied faith communities rooted any religious tradition with a long history. But this approach holds the promise of tapping the creativity and motivational energy that image-thick, narrative-thick, and practice-thick religious perspectives can generate.

The topic of martyrdom elicits great motivational energy and lends itself to narrative and imaginative "thickness". We were delighted that each panelist's paper offered a proposal for further study and/or action based upon their theological and/or ethical conclusions.

Matthew Lundberg's central paper differentiates between 1) preConstantinian "martyrs of confession," 2) recent "martyrs of solidarity" killed for acting on behalf of the oppressed, and 3) the passive "crucified people" who are killed to terrorize the living. Drawing heavily on Brueggemann and Sobrino, he delineates the Hebrew prophetic pattern of "telling the truth about reality" and "proposing better solutions," then examines how it operated in the life and death of Jesus and of recent martyrs of solidarity. In light of arguments in violent contexts over "Who decides who is a martyr and who is not?", Lundberg answers that the hermeneutics of theology demands that martyrs reproduce in their lives the dynamics that

⁹ Torrance, "Convocation," 3.

¹⁰ Torrance, "Convocation," 3.

led to Jesus' death and its salvific character. He proposes four theological implications of using martyrs as a hermeneutical lens: 1) theology must engage social problems via God's option for the poor; 2) it will therefore always be conflictive; 3) it must serve the church, the Christian faith, and the world; 4) it should see the martyrs as a quasi-sacramental source of access to the realities of Christ's cross and resurrection.

Citing ancient martyrologies, Lisa Powell's response argues that, "The Christian martyrs, in their imitation of Christ" offer more than a quasi-sacramental source of access to Christ, but "become Christ in his ubiquity". She states that "it possible to see a clear continuity between the particulars of ancient Christian martyrs and those of contemporary Christian martyrdoms in Latin America." She proposes early Christian martyrologies be examined closely to "enrich the contemporary task of liberation theology" and to raise "challenges to theologies that have neglected and/or oppressed the poor."

Santiago Slobodsky's contends that Lundberg's Christian liberationist understanding of martyrs of solidarity "calls into question the understanding of martyrdom current in post-Holocaust Judaism." Drawing upon Jewish liberation theology, he argues that some streams of current Judaism have adopted Constantinian concepts of power that justified Christian oppression of Jews, and are thereby making Palestinians the "permanent Other" in Israel. Citing *Kiddush Ashem*, he demonstrates that acceptance of death as the price for social struggle was not part of the pre-1945 Jewish approach to martyrdom. He proposes that Jewish and Christian conceptions of martyrdom be "analyzed with respect to cross-commonalities between both brother/sister traditions."

Women who die as a result of domestic violence can be seen as passive martyrs like those Ellacuría calls "the crucified people", Debra L. Duke suggests. Noting that "Clergy are among the top four professions . . . who are perpetrators of domestic violence," she asks, "When will we as a church, dare to confront this?" It was the decision of churches to respond to the deaths of Latin American martyrs of solidarity by engaging in social action that made these deaths practically redemptive, she points out. She proposes that "It is only through our daring to stand in the prophetic sphere – and through our responding courageously to domestic violence martyrs – that the blood of these martyrs will become the seed of life . . ."

Pushpa Iyer contends that Lundberg's paper, "provides no space to consider concepts or examples of martyrdom that may not be visible from the

narrow confines of a theological lens.” Noting that the term *martyr* has a much broader use than in specifically Christian circles, she describes two current nonChristian conceptions of “martyrs for justice”: Gandian “strategic martyrdom” in which religion may play a supporting role, and “activist martyrdom” in which faith is not explicitly brought into public life. She points out the semantic chaos that results (“martyr or freedom fighter or terrorist or traitor?”) when a religion “has the power to bestow the title of martyr on its own people alone.” She proposes “some kind of dialogue between these different theological worlds rather than for each one to continue to think exclusively within its own box. Martyrdom has to be situated within such a context of inclusive religious discussion today.”

Bifurcating theology from ethics could result from bifurcating “martyrs of confession” from “martyrs of solidarity,” Rubén Rosario-Rodríguez warns. The political acts of contemporary martyrs were the direct result of doctrinal commitments, he contends, and “that to argue otherwise is to suggest that liberation is an extra-scriptural concept (perhaps derived from Marxism) . . .” He shares “the concerns of some feminist and Womanist theologians” that Sobrino’s insistence that the crucified people “*bring* salvation through their suffering” could impede liberation. Noting the need to adapt Sobrino’s views on martyrdom for the North American context, Rosario-Rodríguez proposes that “if Christ is present among the poor, the hungry, the sick and the imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46), the church must also be present among the poor, the hungry, the sick, and the imprisoned.”

All involved in forum seemed extremely concerned about the interaction between religion and social justice. But it was clear that had we applied more consciously the recommendations above that were derived from Torrance’s address, we would have spent less time “missing” each other due to less than clearly stated interpretive differences rooted in religious, cultural, and disciplinary diversity. We would then have had time to consider taking more concrete action upon the various proposals suggested. One immediate action *KOINONIA*’s board did take was to appoint Elliot Ratzman, a Jewish Ph.D. student in the religion department at Princeton University, to be editor-at-large, due in part to his skill in moving back and forth between “tribal” and “public” discourse.

The open submissions in this issue were not part of a live conversation, but were chosen because they contain and/or encourage multireligious, multicultural and/or multidisciplinary thinking. In light of the ways in which

current warfare is sometimes framed as a clash between Christianity and Islam, the board found that Larry Stratton's rich account of the early 20th century conversion of son of an Anglican clergyman to Islam, and his subsequent critique of British Christendom, provided still pertinent help in seeing ourselves as others see us. Raymond Powell's article urges historians of religion to study more seriously the doctrines of the Cathars, a group persecuted as heretics by Catholic Christians, noting that – given the doctrinal emphases and economic suffering of the time – “its dualism may have made better sense of the world to average men and women than the competing Catholic answers to life's questions.”

Kenyatta Gilbert outlines a way to form a theological bridge between the prophetic and priestly aspects of preaching through a nuanced synthesis of two approaches to interdisciplinary work for theology: Matthew Lamb's revised praxis correlational model and James E. Loder's transformational model. Ariane Arpels-Josiah's paper demonstrates that John Calvin's theological anthropology and view of nature can provide rich resources for the task of living responsibly in a technologically advanced and environmentally challenged society if his work is read in conversation with the field of environmental ethics. *KOINONIA* is especially pleased to publish Brazilian pastor Raimundo Barreto's moving account of what longtime PTS professor Richard Schaull called his “third conversion”. Schaull claimed that his cross-cultural immersion in the last years of his life in the churches of poor Pentecostals in a Brazilian shantytown led not only to personal transformation but to an awareness of the ways in which Third World Pentecostalism is transforming the worldwide church.

It has been the experience of the American members of *KOINONIA*'s board that many of our richest experiences at this seminary of coming to an awareness of God's mission within the worldwide church have been through conversations with international colleagues like Barreto. As US society becomes increasingly multireligious and multicultural, American churches have much to learn about becoming gracefully bilingual from churches where Christians are a minority, such as how to participate in public discourse about substantive ethical propositions without either: 1) denying our particular religious absolutes, 2) asking those with different religious absolutes to deny theirs, or 3) wafting off into “thin” appeals to supposed ethical universals.

With the importance of multicultural conversation between American and international students in mind, I will return to some of Torrance's com-

ments at the beginning, the middle, and the end of his address.

... We have ... an historic tradition of rigorous scholarship and have long *welcomed* an international community. These are factors that can *make a difference* in the world. But all of these are *material* [author's italics] things. I believe that the founding *charisms* of this school were in *matters of the spirit*. So I want initially to consider a particular *perspective* on the world ...¹¹

... I used to believe that Christian ethics was fundamentally to do with geography, with map-making and *boundaries* and so was related to a spatial intelligence. Increasingly now I believe it is to do with *being transformed* and that neither universalism or prescription are its method.¹²

... One of my chief hopes for this school is that it may be a place where *truthfulness and grace continue to be linked*, and we do not attempt to live purely *functionally* ... Since I arrived here four weeks ago, I have received many letters. Perhaps the most striking came from the Myanmar Institute of Theology. The principal wrote that Burma under socialism was isolated for many years. She was among the first to be allowed to go abroad. She said: "PTS gave me that chance, and since then has accepted and equipped 10 faculty members". She listed the Institute's new programs, ending: "These programs and activities are all possible because PTS *cared enough* about a small seminary in a Third World country". That, I think, is close to the founding *charism* of this school.¹³ [unless noted, italics mine]

Torrance appears to be signaling a difference between, on the one hand, simply "welcoming" internationals to PTS and, on the other hand, establishing a close relationship with a church in a minority situation – a relationship which is longterm enough, and deep enough, to "care enough" to offer advanced training to ten seminary faculty. He seems to be indicating that, while mere welcoming can indeed "make a difference," it is a "material thing" that can make only a "functional" difference. He appears to be linking "matters of the spirit" with one's "perspective on the world" — and to be making a connection between: 1) the cooperation of grace and truth, 2) Christian ethics that go beyond establishing boundaries to real transformation, 3) caring

¹¹ Torrance, "Convocation," 1.

¹² Torrance, "Convocation," 5.

¹³ Torrance, "Convocation," 6.

“enough” about Third World churches to invest in longterm change, 4) the seminary’s original charism.

Even a cursory look at the history of Christian missions in the past two centuries makes it clear that Princeton Seminary has long demonstrated a particular giftedness for training scholars who can build up churches in difficult circumstances worldwide. But it is also clear to current students in the Ph.D. program that changes in the way student immigration policies are being interpreted at PTS as a result of 9/11, and the resulting changes in seminary policies in funding doctoral work, are making the completion of the doctoral program much more difficult for our international colleagues.

Many doctoral students at PTS did elect to study here because we are clear that the absolutes we have committed ourselves to are rooted in the Christian faith, and we want to study in an academic community rooted in those same Christian commitments. Most seminary Ph.D. programs can offer that. But Princeton Theological Seminary has been unique in the Reformed tradition in providing such a community with access to a breadth of expert Christian and non Christian academic perspectives — via Princeton University, its own international and internationally-renowned faculty and library holdings, and the historically large number of international Ph.D. students enrolled — which is wider than that of any other seminary doctoral program in the US.

The scholars which PTS’s Ph.D. program has produced have thus been known for their global perspective long before it was fashionable to think globally. *KOINONIA*’s board hopes that the cooperation of grace and truth, and the funding and creation of more space for risky multicultural conversation among the entire seminary community, can provide opportunities for Princeton Seminary’s unique charisms to be expressed in transforming ways that were unimaginable prior to such mutual vulnerability.

SANDRA COSTEN KUNZ
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of Life: Liberation Theology, Martyrdom, and the Prophetic Dimension of Theology

MATTHEW D. LUNDBERG

INTRODUCTION

The topic of martyrdom usually brings to mind the martyrs of the early church who were persecuted under the Roman Empire. Tradition has Tertullian declaring, regarding those martyrs, that “the blood of the [martyrs] is the seed [of the church]” (*semen est sanguis Christianorum*) (Tertullian 1986: L).¹ According to the early church, “martyrs” were those Christians of exceptional quality and faithfulness who willingly surrendered their lives in the face of pressure to deny their confession of Christ. And the early church was filled with such martyrs: Peter the apostle, James the son of Zebedee, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Origen, and Cyprian are just a few of the more famous ancient martyrs. The logic of Tertullian’s dictum lies in the fact that these deaths did not have the effect that their killers intended—the destruction of the fledgling Christian church. Rather, in some inexplicable fashion, these deaths only energized the ones they were intended to frighten and disperse, and the church grew.

This kind of martyrdom, death instead of apostasy, has been more prevalent at some points of Christian history than others, but it has always been a fact of the church’s existence. However, in our contemporary world another

¹ The statement by Tertullian, as it has come to be quoted popularly, includes “martyrs” and “of the church,” even though the original quote in *Apologeticus* has “Christians” in place of “martyrs” and lacks “of the church.” It is from this quote and a remark made by Jon Sobrino in Sobrino 1990b: 53 that the title of this paper is derived.

kind of martyrdom has become prominent, one that has probably also always been a fact of the church's existence, though not as celebrated as the type of martyrdom mentioned above. This second type is the martyrdom of those who have willingly accepted death in the course of their struggle for justice and the rights of the poor, against injustice and repression of the masses of people, largely in the third world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Archbishop Oscar Romero are a few famous examples of this kind of martyr.

Martyrs are analogous to prophets in their function for the church and theology. The thesis of this paper is that reflection on past and present martyrs, when interpreted christologically, is an essential window into the *prophetic* dimension of Christian theology. The focus here will be on those contemporary martyrs in the service of justice, who were murdered because they spoke the truth compellingly, in a way that could not be ignored, because they perceived the truth when it was hardly decipherable. In short, I am speaking of those who were murdered because they spoke prophetically. No brand of theological reflection that intends to be prophetic can ignore the significance of martyrdom. For in confronting martyrdom we confront an undeniable witness to the truth. And only with such witness to the truth, which ultimately is Christ, do we stand within the sphere of the prophetic.

This is a thesis that I have adopted from Latin American liberation theology. Those who live in lands of poverty, repression, war, and murder are understandably more attuned both to the relevance of their martyrs *and* to the need for theology to be prophetic. We who live and work in the first world, sheltered as we are (though to some degree without excuse for that shelter), must listen to those from the third world whose Christian witness is indelibly informed and shaped by those among them who have shed blood, by those who have been tortured and murdered for their Christian commitment to justice and to the poor. In so doing it is possible to understand more profoundly the course of Jesus' life, the significance of his death, the hope of his resurrection, and the relevance of all of this for the world in which the church is called to be faithful.

This paper will first discuss the issue of defining martyrdom. The second section roots the "prophetic" dimension of theology in the Old Testament prophetic literature. The third major section examines liberation theologian Jon Sobrino's reflections on the martyrs of El Salvador. The fourth section focuses on the difficulty of interpreting the lives of martyrs and incorporating their witness into the work of theology. The final section will offer

some suggestions as to the significance of martyrdom for the prophetic dimension of theology's role in Christian witness.

DEFINING MARTYRDOM

The traditional understanding of martyrdom as the death of one who continues, in the face of persecution, to confess Christ or some piece of doctrine, is probably the customary Christian definition of the term "martyr." This type of martyrdom, which we might provisionally call the "martyrdom of confession," is a martyrdom that is rooted in some person's, group's, or nation's hatred of the faith (*odium fidei*). A prime biblical example is that of Stephen refusing to alter his preaching of the gospel so as to deflect the concerns of the high priest regarding the destruction of the temple and the change of the law (Acts 6:13-14). Following Stephen's long sermon, which culminated in his denunciation of the leaders: "'You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do'" (7:51 NRSV), Stephen is dragged outside the city and stoned (7:58). In the course of his death, as Luke describes it, Stephen displayed the kind of attitude that became prototypical for the martyr: "While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them . . .'" (7:59-60a).

This story illustrates many of the features that came to be associated with martyrdom in Christian antiquity. Stephen submitted willingly to unjust death rather than relinquish his confession of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he died calmly, with his thoughts not on his own suffering, but rather on God and on forgiving his murderers. As such, the text evokes the memory of Jesus' manner of death on the cross (see Brown 1997: 296).² Historian Carole Straw argues that this facet of ancient martyrdom was associated in the Christian mind with the conquering of death and was eventually correlated with the traditional Christian body-soul dualism. The martyr knew that death only touched the body, not the soul, and certainly not one's relationship with God. This was the case, as Straw writes, because "...the martyr's heroic death recapitulated Christ's paradoxical victory on the cross and anticipated the resurrection" (Straw 2002: 39).

² I owe this point to Jason J. Ripley.

The crucial aspect of this kind of martyrdom is the element of confession. It is the primary *casus mortis*. It is for confessing Christ or for believing some piece of orthodox doctrine regarding Christ that a martyr of confession is killed. This remains the understanding of the Roman Catholic Church to this day. Martyrdom is: "the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude." (Vatican 1995: 2473).

It is impossible to deny the truth in this definition of martyrdom. Given the threat of torture and death in the face of pressure to apostatize, holding onto one's faith and courage to confess it is a remarkable thing. It is little wonder that this sense of martyrdom has so captivated the Christian imagination and animated many Christians, past and present, in the bold confession of their faith. However, true as this definition may be, as important a dimension of Christian witness as it encapsulates, and therefore as *necessary* as this definition may be, is this a *sufficient* definition of martyrdom? Does it do justice to the multidimensional character of Christian commitment, as well as to the church's historical experience of the different ways in which Christian witness has led certain Christians to death for their faith?

What about the murders of those who entered, out of the depths of their Christian commitment, into conflict on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, for the cause of justice? To return to our original examples: (1) Dietrich Bonhoeffer's commitment to Christ led him to oppose the Nazi destruction of Germany and annihilation of the Jewish people. For that reason the young pastor and theologian, who tended toward pacifism, became a part of an underground plot to kill Adolf Hitler. Bonhoeffer's actions eventually led him to be hanged at Flossenbug on April 9, 1945. (2) Martin Luther King Jr.'s Christian commitment led him to take an active role in organizing blacks in the South to oppose inequality and racial oppression in the United States actively and peacefully, even though that jeopardized his life. King was shot on April 4, 1968 on the balcony of his room at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis. (3) Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, a formerly conservative and anti-populist bishop, spent his three years in the archepiscopacy denouncing, in the name of Christ, the government and military forces that were repressing and massacring the people in the name of national security. Romero was gunned down at the altar of a small chapel in San Salvador on March 24, 1980.

As is apparent in these three famous examples, these martyrs died not simply on account of their confession of Christian faith or some aspect of doctrine. Rather, their deaths were the result of their solidarity with the oppressed and the decisions they made as a result. Here martyrdom is not inflicted by reason of hatred of the faith (though that may be implied in the actions of the killers), but by reason of hatred of justice (*odium iustitiae*) (Sobrino 2003:2; Limón 1993:714; Peterson 1997:95).

Therefore it is necessary to add this dimension of martyrdom, which we might provisionally call the “martyrdom of solidarity,” to the dimension of martyrdom of confession in order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the reality of martyrdom. That this is the case is especially apparent if faith or Christian commitment is understood as a *total* response of the *whole* self to God’s self-revelation. If that is the case, then although word and deed, confession and acts of solidarity, can be distinguished from one another, they cannot be separated. They flow from the same fount of faith. Seen this way, the actions of Bonhoeffer, King, and Romero must be interpreted as functions of Christian confession—confession in deed as well as word. To focus solely on the dimension of confession as word would be to cut it off from the acts and ethical stances that confession informs. Karl Rahner, in a well-known quote, asks why Archbishop Romero should not be considered a martyr: “Why would not Monseñor Romero, for example, be a martyr? After all, he fell in the struggle for justice in society, fell in a struggle he waged from his deepest Christian convictions” (Rahner 1983, cited in Sobrino 2003:45). The converse is also true: the element of solidarity cannot be separated from the element of confession. Christian actions flow from an understanding of the Christian faith, a particular confession.

So the traditional definition must not cause us to neglect the martyrdom of solidarity. But today the danger is that the traditional definition may be forgotten, even though Christians today in many different parts of the world face persecution and threat of death simply for remaining Christian. This means that it is necessary to find the essential unity of the martyrdoms of confession and solidarity, in order to show that they are in fact *one* martyrdom. That unity consists in the fact that in both cases the person martyred is killed for attempting to maintain the true faith (either in confession, practice, or both) in the face of forces that are hostile to the confession or practice of the faith. Furthermore, in both cases the person martyred puts herself in this situation actively, but then passively accepts violence and death, rather than doing what is required to put herself out of harm’s way. Both types are

confessions of Christ, each in a different way. In both cases the person is a witness to the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus and the approach of the kingdom of God (see Balasundaram 1997:17).³

But the primary purpose of this paper is to show the relevance of martyrdom for the prophetic task of theology. How are these martyrs analogous to prophets? How is their witness a prophetic one? How can reflection upon these martyrs contribute to an understanding of theology's prophetic dimension? Answering these questions requires attention to the nature of the Hebrew prophetic literature.

HEBREW PROPHETIC LITERATURE AND THE PROPHETIC WITNESS OF THEOLOGY

Any investigation of the nature of biblical prophecy is beset with several difficulties. Chief among these difficulties is the eclectic nature of the prophetic corpus. As Walter Brueggemann writes: "The general phenomenon of prophecy in Israel is enormously diverse in its many manifestations. Any generalization about prophecy is likely to fail to comprehend the data, and yet our interpretive task of necessity entails an attempt at generalization" (1997: 622). This diversity is due mainly to the fact that the prophets are not in the business of making generalized declarations, but speak the word of Yahweh to the various situations in which they find themselves (Brueggemann 1997: 624). Another difficulty is the complicated task of using the prophets to understand the "prophetic" dimension of theology through the lens of the martyrs. This difficulty lies in the fact that, as the prophets and the martyrs are related to one another, it is necessary to recognize the *analogous* nature of the comparisons being made. As is so often the case in theology, the *mutatis mutandis* clause must be recognized, in order to respect both the unique nature of biblical prophecy and the very different character of the prophetic dimension of Christian theology. Keeping these warnings in mind, however, Brueggemann is right that interpretation requires some generalization. We must understand something about the central elements of the prophetic

³ Rahner's mediating definition encompasses both aspects: "Martyrdom, as it is understood today, is death for the sake of Christian faith or Christian morals" (1967:81). Jürgen Moltmann is another theologian who presents a multi-dimensional understanding of martyrdom (1993: 196-204).

message if we are to understand the prophetic dimension of Christian theology. These generalized features will be illustrated here by reference to the book of Amos.

A first feature of the message of the prophets is their denunciation of *sin* and corresponding announcement of *judgment*.⁴ Sin is a power, according to the prophets, that has permeated Israelite society and has pulled Israel from its proper relationship with Yahweh. It is difficult to miss the fact that the prevalent theme of Amos is the impending judgment of Yahweh against Israel. The very first words of Amos make this undeniable:

The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem;
the pastures of the shepherds wither, and the top of Carmel dries
up. (1:2, NRSV)

Then Amos launches into a series of denunciations of various nations, showing that Yahweh's judgment upon the nations *and* Israel is imminent (1:3-2:16). Just one example will suffice:

Thus says the LORD:

For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;

because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair
of sandals...

So, I will press you down in your place, just as a cart presses down
when it is full of sheaves.

...those who handle the bow shall not stand, and those who are
swift of foot shall not save themselves, nor shall those who ride
horses save their lives;

and those who are stout of heart among the almighty shall flee
away naked on that day,

says the LORD. (2:6, 13, 15-16)

Indeed, the whole of the book is a long strand of declarations of judgment and impending disaster (see, e.g., 3:2, 3:11, 3:14-15, 4:2-3, 6:8, 6:14, ch 7 *passim*, 8:2-3, 8:7-12, 9:1-10).

⁴ Indeed, this feature of denouncing sin and proclaiming judgment is so dominant in the prophetic corpus that Claus Westermann can use the oracles of judgment as the prototype of prophetic speech (Westermann 1991).

This general critique of sin and announcement of judgment manifests itself in a twofold focus on (1) social and political injustice; and (2) religious syncretism and misuse of the cult, as the grounds for that judgment. To be sure, if Yahweh is to be known as a truly *just* God, Yahweh's judgment must be based on something. The combined critique of worship and social behavior is based on the prophetic conviction that all of life is a unity, that all of life is related to Yahweh and therefore subservient to him (see Eichrodt 1961: 353, 364, 381ff.).

In Amos, one of the primary reasons for judgment is the various types of injustice that were being practiced. Gerhard von Rad describes it as such:

Actually, Amos shows us a society whose social life is cleft in two—a property-owning and therefore economically self-sufficient upper class lived at the expense of the 'little people', and the wrongs done were particularly apparent in the administration of justice, since only full citizens could sit and speak in the law courts; at the same time, however, as owners of property, these men were interested parties and, often enough, judges in their own cases; slaves, foreigners, orphans, and widows had no one to uphold their just claims. (1965: 135)

Amos thunders at those who are responsible for oppression of the poor:

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria,
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their
husbands, "Bring something to drink!"

The Lord God has sworn by his holiness: The time is surely coming
upon you,

when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with
fish-hooks. (4:1-2; see also 5:7, 5:11, 6:12, 8:5-6)

The point is clear: such practices are incommensurate with Israel's status as the chosen nation.

This aspect is closely connected to the second major aspect of the prophetic denunciation of sin and warning of judgment—syncretism and perversion of the cult. Take for example what von Rad says of the suspicion that lay behind the prophecy of Elijah: "...[W]ere people still worshipping *Jahweh*? Was it not rather Baal, with his control over the blessings of the world of nature, who was now in their minds? For Baal was nonetheless Baal, even when invoked by the name *Jahweh*" (von Rad 1965: 15; cf. 53, 65; cf. Eichrodt

1961: 323, 330-1, 328, 340, 364ff). Amos threatens Judah for its rejection of the *torah* of the covenant (2:4).⁵ It is most apparent in chapter 4, in which Yahweh repeatedly accounts his acts of provision and salvation for Israel, each of which is concluded by the divine lament: “yet you did not return to me.” Amos also makes clear that this departure from the covenant had led to religious hypocrisy:

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings and grain-offerings,
I will not accept them;

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not
look upon.

Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the
melody of your harps.

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-
flowing stream. (5:21-24; see also 2:7-8, 4:4-5, 5:25-27)

The message is clear: practicing various sacrificial rites and forms of worship will not curry Yahweh's favor if the worshippers' hearts and lives contradict the worship.

Closely linked to threats of judgment is the prophetic call to *repentance*. In fact, the possibility and necessity of repentance are implicit in the very announcement of judgment itself. In Amos this is evident in the divine laments of chapter 4, in which it is shown that the original bestowals of divine favor and providence were meant to prompt a “return” to Yahweh. The gap of time between the announcement of judgment and its fulfillment means that the threat is not absolute. There is still the possibility of changed hearts and lives. This is confirmed in Amos by texts that explicitly call Israel to change its ways and return to correct covenant-behavior:

Seek the LORD and live, or he will break out against the house of
Joseph like fire,

⁵ von Rad claims that Old Testament theology has too easily ignored the essential role of the law for the prophets (1965:4-5). Brueggemann similarly argues that the concern for justice in the prophets is in fact a call to return to the Mosaic tradition and its covenantal demand of the practice of justice (1997: 644).

and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it...

Seek good and not evil, that you may live;

and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said.

Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate;

it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. (5:6, 14-15)

Such texts show the conditional nature of the judgment that impends.

The very possibility of repentance implies the abiding presence of *hope* amidst terrible threats of judgment. Even a nation and persons who have lapsed into terrible sin are not beyond hope, provided they return to the covenant. But this hope is possible solely because of the mercy of Yahweh. In Amos, the power of hope is shown most strikingly by the book's conclusion, as Yahweh promises not to destroy Israel completely (9:8) and assures the future of Israel:

I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;

they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them,

says the LORD your God. (9:14-15)

In all of this, what is most important about the prophetic message is that it claims to be the very revelation of Yahweh. That is to say, in everything the prophets do, their focus is not on themselves and their own role, but they continually point beyond themselves to the God who had previously delivered Israel from its oppression. Walther Eichrodt speaks of this as the task of bringing "a new total understanding of the will of Yahweh" to a situation which had degenerated into "a perversion of the whole conception of the divine-human relationship" (1961: 343, italics removed). In addition to revealing Yahweh's continuing desire for Israel to observe the *torah*, the prophets also reveal God's new message to Israel in her current situation. Eichrodt characterizes the prophet in this regard as "...the mediator through whom the divine life made its way into a world otherwise sealed against it" (1961: 326, italics removed). The so-called "messenger formula" which the prophets used

to introduce their oracles serves to indicate that what follows is the "direct word of God" (von Rad 1965: 37; cf. 56; 59; 68; Brueggemann 1997: 627-633; Preuss 1996: 73-76). Therefore the critique made of Israelite society, in all its dimensions, stemmed from the prophets' experience of the divine. Their critique was not a human one, but from Yahweh himself.

Finally, we must not lose sight of the contested nature of this prophetic critique and revelation, lest we forget what made the prophets such apt vehicles for the word of Yahweh, and therefore so controversial in their day. Brueggemann states it well:

In principle, the prophets are uncredentialed. But because their utterances characteristically speak against dominant culture, either the buoyancy of dominant culture or its despair, it is inevitable that they are challenged and that they must seek to give some justification for their utterance. That is, revelation...is profoundly unwelcome, for it invades a life well-ordered without serious reference to Yahweh (1997: 628; cf. 630-1).⁶

Because of this the prophets were subjected to much suffering and an uncertain fate. As von Rad writes: "Not only the prophet's lips but also his whole being were absorbed in the service of prophecy. Consequently, when the prophet's life entered the vale of deep suffering and abandonment by God, this became a unique kind of witness-bearing" (1965: 36). Some of the prophets (such as Amos) encountered banishment and possibly even death (Brueggemann 1997: 632). The contested nature of biblical prophecy is irreducible, simply because the prophets' message claims to be revelation of Yahweh, and it does so as critique of the current sinful situation in Israelite society.

In these features of Hebrew prophecy it is possible to glimpse a basic prophetic pattern, which certainly runs through the book of Amos. The denunciation of *sin* leads to the threat of *judgment*. This threat itself presupposes the possibility of *repentance* as a response to the proclamation of judgment. Finally, this repentance is possible only if grounded by *hope* in Yahweh's continuing provision. While this paper will later discuss more specifically how theology is to be "prophetic," the field of theology must enter into this

⁶ This difficulty is the reason why Horst Dietrich Preuss states that only in retrospect is it possible to differentiate accurately between the "true" prophets and the "false" ones (Preuss 1996: 86).

pattern, if its task is to ensure that what the church proclaims is indeed the gospel revealed in Christ. As the church preaches the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ, and as theologians reflect upon that proclamation and attempt to critique and clarify it,⁷ they enter into the sphere of the *true* prophet. This presents the difficult but necessary work of clarifying this discussion of prophecy christologically.

A venerable tradition in Protestantism (the *munus triplex*) has attempted to interpret Christ according to, and as the fulfillment of, the three Old Testament "offices" that usually required anointment. While that tradition has received its due criticism for imposing preconceived Hebrew notions upon Jesus without fully warranting that imposition textually (see Pannenberg 1968: 212-24), it remains the case that seeing Jesus as a prophet has textual warrant and is a helpful tool for interpreting the career of Jesus as it is accounted by the gospels. First, Matthew presents Jesus as preserving and deepening the message of the law and the prophets (see Mt. 5:17-18, 7:12, 22:40). Jesus fulfils rather than abrogates the law. Just as the Old Testament prophets called the nation and the people back to faithful adherence to the demands of the covenant, so also Jesus calls for a decision from his hearers, and presents a new interpretation of the law (as in the Sermon on the Mount). Part and parcel of Jesus' proclamation was his critique of sin, his denunciation of injustice, and his clarion call to true worship over and against hypocrisy. Furthermore, just as the prophetic task dominated the entire *persons* of the Old Testament prophet, so also Jesus' message is inseparable from his own person. His message carries him to his own death. Yet the crucial difference between Jesus and the Hebrew prophets, the difference that reveals Jesus precisely as the *true* prophet, is the fact that both Jesus' *person*, that is Jesus himself, and Jesus' *work* of establishing the kingdom of God through his death and resurrection, became the content of the gospel message. This is because, in contrast to the regular prophets who were bearers of revelation of Yahweh, Jesus was revelation in the flesh. He was, as the christological tradition has always insisted, the very being of God become human. Thus the preaching of this Jesus—his condemnation of sin, and call to repent and follow him on the basis of the hope provided by his death and resurrection—takes us squarely into the prophetic pattern. Inasmuch as theologians reflect upon *that* gospel, they inevitably come to do prophetic theology.

⁷ My construal of the task of theology here owes much to Karl Barth's definition of the task of dogmatics as "criticising and revising [the church's] speech about God" (Barth 1975:3).

LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND MARTYROLOGY

In recent theology it is Latin American liberation theology that has reflected most rigorously on the theological significance of contemporary martyrdom. This is not surprising, given the particular social and political situation out of which liberation theology arises, as well as the particular themes that are emblematic of liberation theology.

Several aspects of liberation theology have led it to be a self-consciously prophetic theology. These are: 1) the liberation theologians' view of salvation as something that encompasses all of reality, 2) its understanding of theology as "critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word..." (Gutiérrez 1988:11) in which Christian doctrine and Christian action are inseparable, and 3) its demand for a preferential option for the poor. Its theologians are called to be prophetic theologians in a manner similar (in an analogical, not univocal way) to the kind of prophetic voice given by the Hebrew prophets, with their denunciations of the injustices of society, their warnings of the impending judgment of God, their exhortations toward a better way (often pointing back to the law previously given them), their attempts to awaken eschatological hope in God's coming kingdom, and, finally, their suffering at the hands of those threatened by their message. It is this way of doing theology that has led the liberation theologians to the reality of martyrdom.

Jon Sobrino, the Salvadoran Jesuit, has presented the most detailed and sustained analysis of the theological significance of martyrdom in Latin America. This is because his adopted homeland and place of work for the past 47 years, El Salvador, has seen more than its fair share of martyrs of solidarity (see Peterson 1997). Through his reflection on the experience of the church in El Salvador, Sobrino has come to believe that liberation cannot be understood apart from martyrdom:

It is not a matter of abandoning liberation in favor of martyrdom, nor yet of simply juxtaposing them. It is rather about complementarity and mutual clarification, because liberation is weakened if it is separated from the reality of martyrdom, and the reverse is also true. More concretely—and as a matter of principle—martyrdom has to be understood in its essential relation to liberation, both as the negative consequence of a liberation praxis, and because it endows that praxis with the positive power of light and energy. (2003:103)

If the liberation theologians are interested in truly giving themselves up for liberation, according to Sobrino, then they must be prepared to accept the possibility of martyrdom, and must be prepared to understand what that possibility of martyrdom *means* for their theological task.

Sobrino insists that although it is understandable to focus one's attention on active martyrs, a full accounting of martyrdom in El Salvador requires consideration of the "crucified people." The term "crucified people," coined by Ignacio Ellacuría, refers to a kind of passive martyr, "the nameless, massacred dead, eliminated in order to terrorize the survivors" (Sobrino 2003:102). The crucified people are the masses of poor people who are killed, almost as by-products of society's greed and injustice. "These do not actively give up their lives in defense of the faith, not even to defend the kingdom in any direct sense. They are seen as 'nuisances,' and must be eliminated to facilitate the elimination of those who work more explicitly for justice" (2003:132). They are called the "crucified people" because they are killed by the same forces of sin that brought Jesus to his cross. Furthermore, they are a crucial present horizon from which we can today understand the cross. They help us to understand the cross and are themselves only understandable in light of the cross (see Ellacuría 1993:581-4).

Sobrino calls the active martyrs the "Jesuanic" martyrs because their path to death is analogous to the path taken by Jesus to his death on the cross. "Martyrs are those who follow Jesus in the things that matter, live in dedication to the cause of Jesus, and die for the same reasons that Jesus died. They are the 'Jesuanic' martyrs" (Sobrino 2003:122). These martyrs are killed because they served the crucified people in a radical way, attempting to take them down from their cross, a historical cross imposed by social, political, and economic forces (Sobrino 1994:53). Sobrino interprets these forces and structures as the "idols of death": "Idols are existing historical realities; they offer (apparent) salvation, they demand worship and orthodoxy, but in reality they dehumanize those who worship them—and what is worse, they need human victims in order to survive" (2003:114). The Jesuanic martyrs are those who, like Jesus, bore witness to the God of life in word and deed, over and against the forces of death (see Sobrino 1993:180-92). The main way these martyrs did this was by telling the truth about reality (Sobrino 1990b:25-9; 2003:104-6, 140-1, 188-9). If reality includes countless crucified people (including at least 75,000 killed or "disappeared" in the course of El Salvador's civil war), then theologians must tell the truth about that reality, search out its causes, and ask what the gospel says about that reality—that it is unjust, a

scandal, and absolutely intolerable. This hearkens back to the prophets' task of exposing injustice, proclaiming God's intolerance of it, and calling Israel to repentance. In persecution for their prophetic stance, the Jesuanic martyrs are killed because they unmasked the idols of death and told the truth about the oppressive nature of reality, thus calling the establishment into question.

This is Sobrino's account of *why* many have been martyred for solidarity in Latin America. But his theology of martyrdom takes a further step. How should these martyrs affect the doing of theology? How can they help theology itself to be prophetic? Of the various answers Sobrino gives, the one we shall focus on here is that the martyrs aid our understanding of theology's christological core. The fundamental similarity, or structural analogy, between the lives and deaths of the martyrs and the life and death of Jesus helps theology to better understand Jesus himself: his ministry, passion and death. In this regard, Sobrino describes a complex hermeneutical circle between the present realities of liberation and martyrdom, and the realities of kingdom and cross in the New Testament witness (2003: 6, 104, 107, 129). The martyrs in their work for liberation are essential for understanding the cross of Jesus in his salvific inauguration of the kingdom of God. The converse is also true, even methodologically prior, for the martyrs' service of liberation is unintelligible apart from the cross and resurrection of Jesus and his proclamation of the kingdom (2003:107-110). Here there is a more or less classical hermeneutical circle, in which the past and present horizons mutually illumine one another, and a fusion of horizons must occur if any adequate and existentially significant understanding is to take place.

But the hermeneutical situation is even more complicated for Sobrino, as each of the horizons itself is also a hermeneutical circle of a sort. The present experience of martyrdom cannot be grasped apart from the present work and hope for liberation. Similarly, the death of Jesus on the cross cannot be understood apart from Jesus' proclamation of and work for the kingdom of God. Furthermore, if one were to factor in the resurrection of Jesus, the analogous "rising" of the martyrs in the people whom they give hope (2003:149-154; 176-78), and the crucified peoples, then the interpretive situation becomes even more thorny. But Sobrino's point is a positive one: the martyrs' hermeneutical function, though perhaps theoretically complex, is that of shedding light, of making further understanding possible (2003:127). Apart from our reflection on the martyrs of solidarity, our under-

standing of the salvation brought by the cross and resurrection of Jesus is impoverished.

At this point, Sobrino's theoretical examination of martyrdom can be made more concrete by a brief examination of his analysis of some specific Salvadoran martyrs from the recent past, though, of course, these martyrdoms themselves are logically and experientially prior to Sobrino's martyrology. Indeed, there would be a sense of emptiness if we remained with Sobrino's theory of martyrs and ignored the martyrs themselves. The first and perhaps most prominent is Archbishop Oscar Romero. When Romero was elected archbishop he was a conservative, ultra-ecclesiastical, albeit honorable bishop (2003:12; 18). Shortly thereafter, however, when Romero stood over the body of the murdered priest Rutilio Grande in 1977 (a priest whom Romero had respected, but with whose methods and goals of pastoral work he had disagreed), Romero came to a realization. He realized that if he were to guide the Salvadoran flock, it would have to be in the manner of a priest like Grande: as an archbishop for whom the poor and their plight was the most important of all realities under God (2003:17). Sobrino writes: "I believe that Archbishop Romero, at the age of fifty-nine, not only underwent a conversion, but had a new experience of God. Never again would he be capable of separating God from the poor, or his faith in God from his defense of the poor. I believe he saw in God the prototype of his own option for the poor, and that that prototype demanded he put his option into practice" (2003:21).⁸

That "conversion" in Romero's life, attitude, and view of his vocation entailed that he practice an unqualified solidarity with the poor. Sobrino writes: "Archbishop Romero's love for his people caused him to relativize all else beside" (2003: 29). This meant that Romero found himself compelled to adopt a "comprehensive view of reality," something typical of the prophetic mind, that focused on the poor and God's partiality toward them (1990a:104-109; cf. Eichrodt 1961:353, 364, 381ff). Such a view of reality included noticing the disparity between rich and poor, and the destructive dynamics of a society that prevented the poor from extricating themselves from their plight. Since Romero's view of reality included such elements, his prophetic vocation as archbishop included vociferous *denunciation* of the established powers, structures, and authorities, which benefited from the unjust situation of

⁸ Sobrino recognizes that Romero might not have been entirely happy with the language of conversion (2003:15-16).

society and therefore violently resisted change. Romero's final homily in the cathedral in San Salvador included an especially strong condemnation of the government and military authorities (see Raj 1997:198). In this fateful homily Romero said: "In the name of God, then, and in the name of this suffering people, whose screams and cries mount to heaven, and daily grow louder, I beg you, I entreat you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!" (Romero 1982:31-32). One day later, March 24, 1980, little over three years after the murder of Father Rutilio Grande, Archbishop Romero's denunciations and telling of the truth about reality had become such a threat to the establishment, such an inspiration to the masses of poor people, that he was shot at the altar.

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuits from the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas in San Salvador, along with their cook, Elba Ramos, and her daughter, Celina Ramos, were murdered in their house in the night. Ignacio Ellacuría, Segundo Montes, Ignacio Martín Baró, Amando López, Juan Ramón Moreno, and Joaquin López y López were the six priests with whom Sobrino shared the Jesuit residence at the university. Sobrino, who was in Thailand at the time, writes: "...the six murdered Jesuits were my community, they were really my family. We had lived, worked, suffered, and enjoyed ourselves together for many years. Now they were dead" (1990b:6). Along with Archbishop Romero, it is undoubtedly this community of martyrs which has been most significant in prompting Sobrino's incorporation of martyrdom into the theology of liberation.

One of the first things Sobrino says about his Jesuit brothers and their lives was that they lived as authentic human beings. "Before all else, they were human beings, Salvadorans, who tried to live honorably and responsibly amid the tragedy and hope of El Salvador" (1990b:10). This is a crucial point because, due to their privileged position as (for five of the six) native-born Spaniards and scholars, they could easily have avoided being wholly rooted in the *Salvadoran* reality. They lived in a humanizing way in an inhumane situation, opting to do their academic work in a "spirit of service" to the poor (1990b:11-13; 15-21). Behind their academic work of theological, sociological, and historical analysis, according to Sobrino, "...lay the real language of love for the Salvadoran people, the language of pity" (1990b:13). Electing this approach in their academic work foreclosed the possibility of living the calm and advantaged life of the "ivory-tower" scholar. They received threats on a regular basis, and were the victims of frequent attacks on their residence

and other areas of the university of which they were an integral part (1990b:14-15).

Sobrino ties this way of life closely to their deaths. In fact, their death by machine guns in the middle of the night, some dragged onto the lawn outside of their residence and some gunned down in their beds, cannot be understood apart from seeing how radical and politically subversive this way of life is. In Sobrino's assessment, what led to the death of the Jesuit martyrs was the fact that they "interfered with the idols [of death] *by telling the truth about the situation*, analyzing its causes, and proposing better solutions," such as dialogue rather than continuing war as the solution to the nation's conflict (1990b:25). It was sin, attempting to cover itself up, that led to their death, because their truth-telling was a form of unmasking.

Now, how are these martyrs related to the prophets and to Jesus? One way of putting it is that the kingdom of God was the point of orientation for all three: the Hebrew prophets, these martyrs of solidarity, and Jesus the true prophet. The prophets, in their critique of Israelite society and call to repentance, anticipate Jesus' definitive inauguration of the kingdom. The martyrs, on the other hand, in their option for the poor and their call to a nominally Christian society to live out its professed Christianity, point back to Jesus' establishment of the kingdom, requiring that people today live in accordance with the character of the kingdom. And it is Jesus Christ, as true prophet and archetypal martyr, the one who ushered in the kingdom of God in person, who gives ultimate meaning to the prophets and the martyrs. All three bring God's will into a sinful situation. Each illustrates in its own way the prophetic pattern: sin—judgment—repentance—hope. As such, all three participate in God's revelation, but each in different ways. The prophets were specially chosen vehicles of Yahweh's message to Israel. Jesus was God's very self, present in person. The martyrs, on the other hand, are not revelatory in the same way. They witness to the truth of Christ, to the will of God, as already revealed. They make God's will present by participating in the reality of Christ to which they bear witness.

In their prophetic role, in which they point to Christ, these martyrs exemplify the solidarity to which the church is called. As the church practices this kind of solidarity with the kingdom of God, it becomes the prophetic church (Limón 1993:714). But what is the relevance of this for theology? Why must theology even have such a prophetic dimension? Cannot theology rise above the fray and thus avoid the dangers of taking a prophetic and contested stance — and possibly lapsing into error? Truly *Christian* theology

has no such option. As the liberation theologians and other theologians, such as Barth and Brunner, have convincingly shown, theology is done for the sake of the church. If this kind of solidarity is the call of the church, and if theology is to be a servant and constructive critic of the church, then theology must follow this path of solidarity if it is to be a truly Christian theology. If the church is called to be prophetic — and therefore involved in the harshness of reality — then theology must reflect critically on that reality. If theology is for the church and the church is for the world, then theology must engage the world so as to serve the church. This brings the theologian into the prophetic sphere of martyrdom—both by reflecting on martyrdom as it relates to the church's witness in the public realm — and by accepting the risk of martyrdom involved in undertaking this prophetic task conscientiously. Theology done in this key must embody the seven aspects that Sobrino outlines regarding the prophetic dimension of Romero's witness (1990a:145-152). It must reflect the *ultimacy* of the truth of God, the *sovereignty* of that truth and its claim on all reality. It must refer to the very *history* in which people live. It must be *partisan* on behalf of those oppressed and repressed masses. For that reason, it must present a *novel* word in the midst of that history which will necessarily also be, to some degree, a *conflictive* word. Finally, due to the partisan, novel, and conflictive dimensions, a truly prophetic theology that has truly integrated the possibility of martyrdom into its work will be *fragile*, *defenseless*, and *contradicted* by the powers and conventional wisdom of the age.

THE HERMENEUTICS OF MARTYRDOM

The fragile, defenseless, and particularly the contradicted nature of prophetic witness as it relates to martyrdom leads to the problem of the *contested* nature of martyrdom that was previously raised regarding the Hebrew prophets. Who has the right and ability to interpret a martyr correctly? Does the life (and thus also the death) of a martyr speak for itself? Who decides who is a martyr and who is not? The early church encountered this problem with the martyrdom of confession, as the enthusiasm to die for Christ the special death of the martyr often led people to such recklessness with their lives that it was increasingly difficult to differentiate between suicide and martyrdom (Straw 2002:42). Though many of the people mentioned in this paper (Bonhoeffer, King, Romero, the UCA Jesuits) may seem to qualify quite

clearly as martyrs, it remains the case that one person's martyr is another person's traitor. And it remains the case that even though the vast majority of observers understand these deaths to be *murders*, crimes without excuse, the perpetrators of these crimes undoubtedly felt "justified" to one degree or another in killing them because they saw the martyrs as traitors, rebels, and criminals. Bonhoeffer, King, Romero, and the Jesuits, each in different ways, were killed because their killers saw them as criminally subversive.⁹

This may seem like a petty point because these potential "justifications" in the minds of the killers certainly seem weak, fraudulent, and outright false to us. It seems *obvious* that the martyrs were right and their killers were murderers. That is probably the case, but it does not nullify the point that there is no "proof" for such an assessment. As with the prophets, the martyrs can offer no credentials. One can only look at their lives and attempt to analyze the relationship between the choices made in their lives and the way their lives ended. On that basis alone can a judgment be made regarding the authenticity of their martyrdom, and more importantly and difficultly, the *meaning* of that martyrdom. This is rendered difficult by the complexity of interpreting *anyone's* life. Lives, intentions, causes and effects, especially for figures involved in the conflictive dynamics of society, are inevitably opaque to some degree. And we must remember, as Sobrino points out with regard to Romero, that this opacity and uncertainty is inevitable and irremovable. It is part and parcel of the *prophetic* dimension of their lives that led to their deaths (1990a:151).

The contested character of the martyrs also needs to serve the critical function of preserving the martyrs' true legacy even from those who *affirm* the martyrs precisely as martyrs. The fact that we so quickly label them "martyrs" should give us pause, because it can too easily serve as an excuse for avoiding for ourselves the prophetic dynamics that led them to their deaths. It is certainly the case that the stories of Bonhoeffer, King, and Romero, for example, are put to many different uses. For example, a Lutheran friend of mine has explained to me how the witness of Bonhoeffer sometimes serves

⁹ This point is especially relevant in an age in which various forms of what most regard as terrorism are interpreted by some as martyrdoms. This reveals the conflictive and ever-contested nature of religious truth claims in a pluralistic and globalized world. Attempting to address this question in detail would take this paper too far afield, but the issue is too relevant to escape notice here.

for some Lutherans as an excuse: "Whew, despite the massive failure of fidelity among Lutherans in Germany, there's at least Bonhoeffer, and he makes up for it." So the question must remain: how do these martyrdoms function for us? Do their deaths provide ways for us to avoid our own? Is this a form of their co-option by the same forces which they opposed in their lives and which caused their martyrdoms?

Related to this hermeneutical difficulty in a different way is the difficulty of saying *anything* about a martyr without cheapening her or his death, saying too easily in shoddy words what should remain mysterious, part of the mystery of a love that is self-sacrificial to the end. It is analogically related to the difficulty of saying anything before the event of the cross of Jesus (see Sobrino 1978:195-201). In some sense the reality of martyrdom must silence us, and must cause theology to think carefully before it speaks, lest it dishonor the witness of the martyr by too quickly explaining away the essential negativity of their deaths (Limón 1993:702).

Therefore theological reflection must be careful in what it says about the martyrs, because it can too easily and cheaply turn the scandal of the martyrdoms into light without the residue of darkness and too easily dull the prophetic edge of the martyrs' witness. In so doing theology would forfeit its own prophetic character by cheapening the martyrdom and removing it from its prophetic, dialectical, and conflictive context.

Though these dangers are inherent in the hermeneutics of martyrdom for theology and, therefore, to some degree unavoidable, they also show the need for a critical interpretive principle that can make the hermeneutical difficulty workable. This critical principle is ever-present in Sobrino's reflection on the Salvadoran martyrs, though I am emphasizing its priority more than Sobrino himself does. This critical principle is the biblical narrative's testimony to the cross of Jesus. A martyrdom can only be interpreted by asking the question of how the life and death of the apparent martyr, in its own way, own context, and within that context's particular set of problems, reproduces the dynamics that led to the martyrdom of Jesus, as well as the salvific character of that death. Though, as Sobrino insists, the contemporary martyrdoms do shed light on the cross of Christ, the interpretive priority must rest with the cross of Jesus. Otherwise the cross of Christ could easily become the subsequent justification for many types of "martyrs," some of which may be less Christian than others. The crucial reason for bestowing methodological priority on Jesus' cross is that it enables the contemporary martyrdoms to retain their proper character as witnesses

to *Christ* and God's salvific *liberation of the world through Christ*; and it is only as *witnesses*, not the thing itself, that martyrdoms retain their proper character. They are the secondary analogue, not the primary analogue.¹⁰ For when they are identified as the real thing, they lose their real power, which lies in the reality which they make present as witnesses and in which they participate—the life, cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Keeping the ordering straight here allows the martyrdoms to be interpreted correctly as *martyrdoms*, for “martyr” is derived from the Greek for “witness.” This is in keeping with the prophets’ task of always pointing to Yahweh. Only as we realize that the life of someone like Martin Luther King Jr. points *beyond* itself do we open up the space to interpret that life rightly and powerfully, and only as such does it participate in the reality which it helps to make present. This allows the witness of Jesus and the breaking-in of the kingdom of God to remain the crucial components of the martyrs’ witness, not their lives in themselves.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MARTYRDOM FOR THE PROPHETIC DIMENSION OF THEOLOGY

At this point it remains to tie the various threads of this paper together in order to show more succinctly some of the implications of martyrdom for the prophetic dimension of theology.

It is significant that all of the martyrs discussed in this paper were, to one degree another, theologians. Theirs was a prophetic brand of theology that led them to “enflesh” their theological theory in a certain kind of practice with significant repercussions in their societies. So the first lesson for a theology that purports to be prophetic is that it cannot abstract itself from the real problems and dynamics of a society. Theologians must adopt the preferential option for the “least of these,” in whom Jesus said he would be present (Mat. 25). What is clearly the driving force in their lives was a concrete and consistent option for the poor, inspired and energized “theocentrically” (Gutiérrez 1993:239-241). They took the side of the oppressed, which, in

¹⁰ At times Sobrino seems to transgress this rule by talking about the “salvation” brought by the martyrs. I think that this is best interpreted along the lines of my proposal, with their “salvation” being precisely Christ’s salvation, with them as analogical mediators or witnesses to that salvation. Another way to put it would be as a *participation* in the salvific martyrdom of Christ.

Franklyn Balasundaram's words, puts the persecutor to shame, causing the persecutor to lash out and destroy the martyr (1997:12). In Sobrino's language, taking the side of the oppressed means for theology that it must depict God according to the scriptures, as the God of life who always opposes the "idols of death" who enslave and oppress. This means that a prophetic theology, a theology that intends to express the most radical consequences of the history of Jesus, as well as the claim of that history on all of creation, must not disconnect ethics from theology, just as the Hebrew prophets never disconnected their critique of injustice from their proclamation of the majesty of Yahweh. Without the ethical dimension it will not be true theology, and certainly not prophetic theology (Limón 1993:705).

In situations of extreme violence and repression, such theological engagement with society may lead to martyrdom. Moreover, in situations of such violence, martyrdom may even be an *inevitable* result of true solidarity. Romero emphasized this point when he preached the following: "Brothers and sisters, I am glad that the Church is persecuted, precisely because it has taken a preferential option for the poor, and has tried to incarnate itself in the interests of the poor ... It would be sad if, in a country where people are being so horribly murdered, there were not also priests among the victims. They are witness to a Church incarnated in the problems of the people" (cited in Sobrino 2003:142). The martyrs reveal the great and potential cost of this. They also reveal the great power and Christian authenticity in doing so.

Bringing theology into the real problems of society leads to a second implication, that of realizing that prophetic theology will always be conflictive. It will never be able to please everyone. When it intends to do so, it forfeits its prophetic character. It must always make an option, always a contested option. These theological martyrs were killed precisely because their theology thrust them into the fray, into the conflicts of society. Sobrino characterizes this as a cross of bearing the weight of reality—which is a reality dominated by what he calls the anti-kingdom (2003:146-7). Thus the primary and most seductive temptation of the church, and of its theology, is to avoid conflict (2003:147-149; see also 1990a:150). It is only from the conflicts of history that produce crosses, or it is only *in spite of* evil, that hope arises, just as the resurrection is subsequent to the cross and only intelligible in the light of it. As Limón points out, the reality that causes martyrdom can be called nothing if not sin (1993:709). Thus from martyrdom theology learns that its prophetic dimension, after the pattern of the Hebrew prophets, can only be maintained as it takes seriously the reality of sin.

A third implication of martyrdom for theology's prophetic task today is that theology must see itself as *service* of the church, the Christian faith, and the world. Inasmuch as it serves these realities, it serves the ultimate reality which is present in the others—the kingdom of God and the God of the kingdom. This is analogous to the prophets' service of Yahweh and Israel through their vocation. Once again Limón is instructive as he shows that such theology is service because it encourages historical liberation by allowing people to feel God's nearness as love. "It is a service to the church and the faith, because it criticizes them and shows them the liberating and redeeming way to follow the Crucified. The martyrs show us how we can become incarnate in history and society without becoming worldly" (1993:715). So theology will serve the world as it theologizes for the poor. And if Sobrino is right that the poor are the reality through which Jesus Christ challenges the church, such theology will serve the church as well, as it enables it to be what God intends it to be (2003:137). The martyrs show theology what is at stake in such service, what must be lost, and what must be given.

Finally, by remaining authentically *Christian* in this way, theology is enabled to employ the testimony of the lives and deaths of the martyrs as a hermeneutical lens that enables further understanding of the world and of the Christian faith. "A murder is darkness, but *sub specie contrarii* it throws light on many things. A martyrdom has its own strong light, which says more than a thousand words about life and faith" (Sobrino 1990b:21). Sobrino perhaps says this best in his reflection on the four American women—Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan—who had cast their lot with the Salvadoran people and were raped and murdered in El Salvador on December 20, 1980: "Christ lies dead here among us. He is Maura, Ita, Dorothy, and Jean. But he is risen, too, in these same four women, and he keeps the hope of liberation alive. The world is moved, and indignant, and so are we Christians. But to us Christians, this murder tells us something about God as well" (Sobrino 1988:156). As Sobrino puts it elsewhere: "...the martyrs (as persons and as peoples) not only *take us back* to theological concepts of God and Christ, but above all they *make them present*. In this way the martyrs become a source of theological knowledge" (2003:127). The martyrs, by remaining true to the gospel, to the option for the poor, cast the sin of the world into stark relief; they also give us eyes to understand the cross and resurrection of Christ, by which God has defeated that sin. The witness that is shown by the martyrs' *deaths*, and particularly the unwillingness to compromise on the option for the poor that characterized their *lives*, is what allows their

deaths (and lives) to be enduring vehicles of hope. This is why Romero, perhaps all too cognizant of what awaited him, claimed that “[i]f they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people” (cited in Sobrino 2003:113). This means that as the martyrs participate in the reality which they make present—the cross and resurrection of Christ—they are a source, a quasi-sacramental source, of theology’s access to those realities. Speaking of theology precisely as *logos* about *Theos*, that is, as *discourse* about God and God’s relationship with creation in Christ, this is probably the most important implication of martyrdom for theology.

In conclusion, we have seen how these martyrdoms are dependent for their meaning on their analogy to the cross of Christ. They are *witness*, a witness that theology cannot avoid if it is to be a truly prophetic theology. By way of conclusion and by way of a further removed analogy, it is necessary, especially in our North American first world society, where authentic martyrdoms of solidarity are harder to come by (since the idols of death here are more circumspect in their destruction), to consider an analogous sense of *living* martyrdom. By “living martyrdom” I mean that theologians who intend to do truly prophetic theology must be prepared to accept the cost of their preferential option, even if there is little chance of the cost being death. Theologians must prophetically be willing to bear the cost of their option, of their denunciations of both the right and left (each in different ways) in service of the God of *life*. True prophetic theology must be willing to accept whatever consequences may follow from testifying to the gospel by calling the church and society to be what they *ought to be*. This kind of living martyrdom, finally, will be most possible for theology as it keeps in mind the legacy of the dead martyrs, those who have given their lives for their commitment to Christ and his kingdom, either by confession or by solidarity.

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A Few Fertile Threads: Ancient and Contemporary Martyrdom as a Neglected Source of Theological Inquiry

LISA POWELL

In an essay entitled “Epistemology and Method of Liberation Theology” Clodovis Boff writes: “the relationship between liberation theology and the great theologies of the past is one of critical complementarity” (Boff 1993:63). He quotes Pope John Paul II, stating that liberation theology “must constitute a new stage—intimately connected with those that have gone before” (63). Boff seeks to expand on this relationship, arguing that liberation theology should seek “to maintain a bond of basic continuity” with historical theologies, both reincorporating “forgotten, fertile theological threads that can enrich us” as well as raising challenges to theologies that have neglected and/or oppressed the poor (81).

Matt Lundberg has skillfully offered us a glimpse of what the product of this task might look like, as he connects the martyrology of contemporary liberation theologian Jon Sobrino with the martyrdoms of the early Christian Church. However, I believe a line of continuity could be drawn much more boldly between these two periods of Christian martyrdom than the one Lundberg has already traced. In this brief response, I will both challenge Mr. Lundberg’s definition of martyrdom in the first centuries of the Christian Church, and I will suggest how a more conscientious look at the martyrdoms of this early period supports a closer comparison between ancient and modern martyrdoms and between the way these martyrdoms were interpreted by their contemporaries.

Lundberg has narrowly defined ancient Christian martyrdom as one of confession, since the martyr chooses death rather than the denial of Christ or “some piece of orthodox doctrine.” Lundberg goes on to state that these

“martyrdoms of confession” were driven by a “hatred of the faith.” I contend, however, that this is an over-simplification. I strongly disagree that ancient martyrdom was based so exclusively on a person’s verbal affirmation of belief in Jesus as Lord, nor do I agree that it stemmed primarily from an explicit hatred of “the faith” amongst particular groups or persons. First, it should be noted that there were a variety of waves of persecution before Constantine, ignited by different rulers and groups in distinct regions, and for very specific — and diverse — reasons. Most, if not all of these early persecutions, were lead by rulers who were not necessarily even aware of the particular beliefs of this small sect. However, among the variety reasons for which the ancient church was persecuted in these differing contexts, was the fact that they were a community that lived differently from those around them. They set themselves apart and did not always behave in the ways dictated by the authorities. Their refusal to give in to the demands of society that Christians considered contrary to the message of Christ could be, and sometimes was, considered subversive.

Many are familiar with the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua for example, who like many martyrs of her day, was put to death for her refusal to offer a sacrifice to the gods. The Christians were different, with a new perspective on life and religion, at a time when such newness was very unpopular. They were, therefore, not persecuted simply for holding an “orthodox belief” — since orthodoxy as such had not yet been determined at the time of these early persecutions. Ignatius himself was martyred before the canon was formed, before the creedal councils, and before the word “heretic” was flung onto the scene by Ireneaus. (Perhaps Lundberg here is referring to later “martyrdoms” inflicted by the church itself upon those considered heretics; but these later martyrdoms would not be considered “ancient”.) Nor do I find the Roman Catholic definition given by Lundberg to support the narrow description he proposes. The Catholic statement affirms three times that martyrdom is based on one’s “bearing witness”. Bearing witness is not simply assent to a doctrinal belief. Bearing witness suggests something far more dynamic, and it seems that both forms of martyrdom he describes involve this more multi-layered form of witness.

I appreciate Lundberg’s desire to have those killed for their solidarity with the oppressed in Latin America to be counted among the church’s martyrs, but I maintain that a more comprehensive look at these early martyrdoms would show that one does not need to create and emphasize two distinct categories for martyrdom—one of confession based on hatred of the faith,

and another one of solidarity based on hatred of justice. I argue, instead, that both ultimately stem from an imitation of Christ, a way of life which repeatedly brings people into conflict with ruling authorities and often leads to an imitation to the point of death. This is a connection ripe for investigation and reflection, and I think Lundberg's work would be enriched with a closer look at the communities persecuted in the early centuries.

Not only is it possible to see a clear continuity, in terms of imitation of Christ, between the particulars of ancient Christian martyrdoms and those of contemporary Christian martyrdoms in Latin America, but the martyrologies developed from them also share a common interpretation of the martyrs as manifestations of Christ. This is a radical edge of the discourse surrounding martyrdom which Lundberg seems to attempt to soften, all the while arguing for the prophetic witness of the martyrs. Yet the very quotes of Sobrino he provides in his paper, support a bolder theological claim than the conclusion Lundberg draws. The claim which allows martyrdom to carry such particular theological significance, a significance which Lundberg rightly argues is worthy of careful reflection, is precisely the claim that the martyr becomes a true embodiment of Christ in his or her historical moment. It is this radical interpretation of the martyr which Sobrino holds in common with the theologians of the ancient church and the authors of the early martyr accounts.

Nearing conclusion, I will quickly look at a few quotes from Lundberg's paper and offer a brief comparison to quotations from the martyrologies of the second and third centuries.

Lundberg notes that according to Sobrino martyrdom is always viewed as a witness to something beyond the martyr herself, and "only as it does this is it actually a participation in the reality which it helps to make present".¹ Lundberg footnotes, however, that Sobrino seems to transgress his own rule of interpreting martyrdom as always pointing beyond the martyr, by "talking about the 'salvation' brought by the martyrs." In his note Lundberg offers a way of interpreting Sobrino's statement about the martyrs' salvific power that seem less offensive to mainline Protestant orthodoxy, but Lundberg himself states that a martyrdom can only be interpreted as Christian if it reproduces, among other things, the salvific character of Jesus' death.

It was not uncommon in the ancient church to attribute the salvific effects of Christ's death to the martyrs as well, be it victory over Satan or a sacrifice that covers sins (Frend 1967:268). Origen provides us with a number of examples. He writes, "Just as the Savior's [martyrdom] brought cleansing to

the world, may not [baptism by martyrdom] also serve to cleanse many" (Origen 67). And "perhaps just as we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus... so some will be redeemed by the precious blood of the martyrs" (Origen 79). And Tertullian says that the only way to ensure salvation is through the second baptism, that of blood (Tertullian 102). The idea of anyone other than Christ providing a form of salvation might run counter to some theologians' orthodox sensibilities, but there is historical precedent for this conception of martyrdom. Perhaps Lundberg is too quick to explain away some of Sobrino's bolder claims.

Lundberg also quotes Sobrino's claim that the martyrs do "not only take us back to theological concepts ... of Christ, but above all they make them present. In this way the martyrs become a source of theological knowledge." Yet Lundberg again softens this claim by suggesting that the martyrs "give us eyes to understand the cross and resurrection of Christ." It seems to me, however, that Sobrino, in line with the authors of the early church martyr accounts, is not proposing that the martyrs merely give us eyes to understand, but that they actually provide us with authentic glimpses of the content of the gospel message within their very persons (something Lundberg only attributes to Jesus, as the true prophet). This idea that the martyr helps to make the real life of Jesus, his ministry and message, present in one's own context is a reoccurring concept in early martyr accounts. The account of the Martyrs of Lyons narrates that when some of the Christians being tortured looked over at another Christian who was soon to be martyred, she appeared to them to be Jesus, recounting that "in their torment with their *physical eyes* they saw in the person of their sister, him who was crucified for them" (emphasis mine).

Both the account of Polycarp's martyrdom and Ignatius' letter to the Romans (in which he anticipates his impending martyrdom) speak of their flesh becoming the bread of Christ, taking on a eucharistic quality (Ignatius 231). The account of Polycarp's martyrdom describes his burning flesh as smelling "like bread being baked", and says that after he died Christians were "eager to take up his body to have a share in his holy flesh." Another account goes even further, saying that within those being martyred "the divine trinity was visible also." Theologians like Maximus Confessor, a few centuries later, might call this radical resemblance another incarnation. The Christian martyrs, in their imitation of Christ, become Christ in his ubiquity, a sign that he can indeed be manifested in a real way in an indefinite number of those imitating him to the point of death. The ancient Christian martyr

accounts thus support Sobrino's interpretation of martyrdom, an interpretation which is echoed, but certainly tamed, by Lundberg who writes, "the martyrs participate in the reality, which they make present—the cross and resurrection of Christ—they are a source, a quasi-sacramental source, [Lundberg clarifies], of theology's access to those realities."

In conclusion, Lundberg has admirably noted a relationship between these phases of martyrdom in the Christian Church. I am suggesting, however, that a closer examination of early Christian martyrologies might well provide some of those "forgotten, fertile threads" that Clodovis Boff suggests can enrich the contemporary task of liberation theology.

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Lundberg's "The Martyrdom of Solidarity": Some Implications for Jewish-Christian Liberationist Dialogue

SANTIAGO SLABODSKY

In his essay, "The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of Life," Matthew Lundberg provocatively reformulates the definition of martyrdom in light of recent liberation theologies, current social struggles, and the retrieval of Christian approaches to martyrdom which were held before Christianity became Christendom. Consequentially, his proposal can be seen as a return to a non-imperial, perhaps even a counter-imperial, understanding of Christianity. I will focus my Jewish liberationist response on the opportunities that Lundberg's main focus offers for a revolutionary renewal of the current Jewish-Christian dialogue in particular, and the project of interfaith dialogue in general.

Lundberg's main suggestion is that the classic concept of "martyrdom as confession," (that is the understanding that martyrdom means death which results from resistance to negating "the truth") (2), should be replaced with a more contemporary understanding of "martyrdom as solidarity" (5), (that is, the understanding that martyrdom results from accepting "death in the course of ... [the] struggle for justice and the rights of the poor" (1). After presenting three methodological considerations, I will embark on the project alluded to in my first paragraph: I will attempt to explain how a post-1945 Christian-liberationist concept of martyrdom is the result of a dialogic conversation with its brother/sister tradition (Judaism), confronts the Jewish Constantinian project, collaborates with a Jewish liberationist struggle, and (perhaps the most important) can be a source for a radical renewal of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Three considerations should be taken into account before we develop our analysis. First, I would like to suggest assertively that Lundberg's paper

can be read in two ways. The first way is to see it as a liberationist argument for replacing the notion of "martyrdom of confession" with the notion of "martyrdom of solidarity." The second way to read his paper is to notice that he is, in fact, asserting the validity of both concepts. I will choose, strategically, the first option as the lens through which I will interpret this paper. But I will admit that, even when he is presenting his thesis, Lundberg is careful to explain the simultaneous possibility of both approaches to martyrdom, although his personal preference for the "martyrdom of solidarity" frame is clear when he reflects on liberationist praxis. (Honestly, I cannot blame him!)

The second consideration deals with Lundberg's interest in maintaining a dialogue with systematic theologians and other thinkers of his own tradition, even though his own reflection is guided by what Juan Luis Segundo would call the hermeneutic circle, a hermeneutical process in which the first step is reflection upon praxis. Since many of the respondents other than myself will probably focus on the Christian theological debate, I will pay special attention to the link between the first two steps of the hermeneutic circle because I see this link as a starting point for agreement between Christian liberationism (theology as reflection upon praxis) and Jewish rabbinism (*halakah* Jewish law as reflection upon praxis).

The third and final consideration is that Lundberg's theoretical reading emerges, especially, from three historical experiences: Christian Latin American martyrs (Jon Sobrino's understanding of the deaths of the Salvadoran Jesuits priests and Archbishop Oscar Romero), Christianity under Nazi Germany (Dietrich Bonhoeffer), and Christian leaders in the American Civil Rights Movement (Martin Luther King Jr.). The parallel the historical experiences that I will reflect on are: (1) Jewish Latin American experiences of social struggle (Marshall T. Meyer and *Masorti*), (2) Judaism under Nazi Germany (the Holocaust), and (3) Jewish American thought linked with Civil Rights Movement (Abraham Joshua Heschel and a civil rights-inspired liberationist Jewish theologian, Marc H. Ellis).

Now that these three preliminary considerations have been stated, we can immerse ourselves in the opportunities for Jewish-Christian dialogue that emerge from Lundberg's work. The most provocative consequence of Lundberg's proposal is that it not only calls into question and critiques Christendom's understanding of martyrdom through reflection on the praxis of social struggle, but it also calls into question the understanding of martyrdom current in post-Holocaust Judaism. After 1945, Judaism emerged as a

Constantinian tradition after adopting the very concept of power that enabled Christendom to oppress Jews during the last 1600 years (Ellis 1997:31-32). Jews in America and Israel have, paradoxically, through their empowerment, reversed roles from being the permanent "Other" of Christendom (Levinas 1961:271-3), to making Palestinians the permanent "Other" in Israel. One basis for thinking about the "martyrdom of solidarity" in liberationist terms that cross traditions (Maduro 1991:vi-viii), is the fact that Bonhoeffer, the first theologian who wrote about and practiced this type of martyrdom, was confronting the Jewish Holocaust.

In post-Holocaust thought, a paradox has emerged in Jewish-Christian relationships. On the one hand, one group (primarily Roman Catholic Liberationists) that belongs to the powerful side of the relationship (Christianity), has decided to engage with the needs of the oppressed, and, as a consequence, has forced a re-evaluation of the concept of martyrdom. On the other hand, another group (Constantinian Jews), which has suffered oppression, and belongs to the powerless side of the relationship (Judaism) has decided to embark on an self-empowerment project that has created new oppressions and has elevated to martyrdom people who are in fact oppressing other people. Hence, from a Jewish Liberationist perspective, Lundberg's proposal of "solidarity-liberationist" martyrdom can be seen not only as a source of confrontation for Constantinian Judaism, but as a natural ally of traditional (pre-1945) and Liberationist (post-1945) Judaism.

I would like to explore the above assertion by considering how Lundberg's proposal supports Liberationist Judaism and confronts Constantinian Judaism. Lundberg is, perhaps, one of the first Christians to recognize that liberation theology, at least in the way in which Sobrino deals with the concept of martyrdom, draws here not primarily upon the Exodus experience, which is the basis of so much of Christian liberation theology, but upon "the prophetic dimension." This move allows Lundberg, implicitly and perhaps without intention, to ask for a reformulation of the contemporary understanding of liberation theology. Coincidentally, the same proposal was made in 1987 by the first two Jewish thinkers to reflect upon the possibilities of a Jewish theology of liberation. Marc Ellis announced that liberation theology is the return to the "Jewish prophetic ethos," (Ellis 1987:120-123) while Dan Cohn-Sherbok presented Jewish "ortho-praxis" as the practice to which liberation theology is returning (Cohn-Sherbok 1987: 9-11).

This return to the "prophetic ethos" is foundational not only generally for the whole of what Brazilian-French Michael Lowy calls "Liberationist Chris-

tianity and Judaism", but also specifically for the Jewish traditional concept of martyrdom. The last category in Jewish law, *Kiddush Ashem*, is properly translated as "the sanctification of the name of God." This concept is inherently social since it incorporates community commitment and solidarity (albeit limited!) with the oppressed. According to the concept of *Kiddish Ashem* Jews are obliged to transgress any law except for three: worship of another god, murder, and incestuous intercourse, in order to save their lives. Martyrdom is thus not acceptable, except in these three cases (Sanhedrin 74a). Jews are even allowed to worship another God on the condition that the community is not present and if by doing so they may save their lives (Tos. Avoda Zarah 54a). In addition, this law emerges from a period during which, according to Emmanuel Levinas, Jews were "the Other," "the oppressed," "the Exteriority" of western history. Therefore, the commitment to "the community of oppressed" that Jewish orthopraxis offers should be seen as a middle ground between Lundberg's Christian "martyrdom of confession" and his "martyrdom of solidarity". This middle ground recognizes the necessity of solidarity with the oppressed, but it limits that necessity, I must admit, to solidarity with fellow Jews.

The most remembered cases of Jewish martyrdom (Rabbi Akiva and the ten martyrs in the beginning of the Common Era, the atrocities of the Crusades, and the European Holocaust during the 20th century) follow the above-mentioned limitation. Nevertheless, at least theoretically, the discussion of the extension of solidarity and/or the obligation toward martyrdom did generate a division among the rabbinical sages (e.g. Talmud Jer. 4:3, 35b). However, the possibility of extending the concept of solidarity to non-Jews was not expressed in concrete form until the *Yad-Vashem* Holocaust museum in Israel included non-Jews that saved Jews during the Holocaust among those given special honor. In spite of this symbolic decision (which was made more by secular and, paradoxically, Zionist Jews than by the rabbinical school), the institutional narrative of the Holocaust (i.e., understanding that the message of the Holocaust is merely self-defense instead of solidarity) disrupted this traditional understanding of martyrdom, which has an intimate relationship with the path that radical thinkers such as Rose Luxemburg, Gustav Landauer, and Walter Benjamin took during the first half of the 20th century.

In consequence, and paradoxically, Jewish groups who held to a more sensitive concept of martyrdom before 1945 have forgotten the component of solidarity with the oppressed that they formerly included in the concep-

tion of martyrdom. After the Holocaust (1933-42/1945), and especially after the Six Day War (1967), they have chosen instead to embrace a narrative of pro-oppression martyrdom. In other words, their narrative supports slogans such as "Massada will not be taken again," "the 614th commandment is to survive even if it carries oppression," and "never again another Holocaust" as a license for self-empowerment and the oppression of "Others" — that is, the Palestinians — instead of engaging, as Lundberg's proposal suggests, their solidarity with the oppressed outside their (Jewish) world.

In spite of the post-1945 events in Israel we can assert that there is a natural connection between a pre-1945 Jewish "martyrdom of solidarity" and a post-1945 liberationist Christian "martyrdom of solidarity". There are, nevertheless, certainly differences between these two conceptions of martyrdom, and this disagreement should be, I think, a starting point for dialogue. Lundberg's readings of the "prophetic dimension" of the Latin American liberation theology are possibly attached to Walter Brueggemann's and, to some extent, Sobrino's interpretation of the prophets. The acceptance of death as a price for social struggle, influenced by a Christological framework, is not supported by Jewish thought. In place of this acceptance of death, some Jews, like Abraham Joshua Heschel, would offer this alternative: the acceptance of the risk of death instead of death itself. In other words, death is not seen as inherently redemptive in mainstream Jewish thought. However, a commitment on the part of Jews and Christians to sharing the same prophetic texts and the same contexts of struggle could certainly be considered the first steps towards a fruitful dialogue about martyrdom, a dialogue which intends to agree on the right to disagree.

I would like to offer a few remarks on why I think this liberationist dialogue could be especially fruitful around the problem of martyrdom. Lundberg states that Dietrich Bonhoeffer's reflection on the Jewish Holocaust is the first model for a liberationist reevaluation of the concept of martyrdom in the Christian tradition (5, 24). It is useful here, I think, to remember that it has been not just in the 20th century that the way in which martyrdom has been interpreted by Christians has arisen out of Christian and Jewish *dialogue in praxis*. Daniel Boyarin asserts that there are two traditional historical explanations for why the interpretation of death which Lundberg calls, "martyrdom of confession" originally arose within the Christian tradition. One claims that this way of framing these deaths was inherited from the Jews, the second proclaims that it was a Roman legacy. Contradicting both of these claims, Boyarin asserts that the conception of martyrdom in the 1st and 2nd centuries emerged as a *dialectical con-*

versation, sometimes violent, between two young brother/sister communities: Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism (Boyarin 1999:1-21). It appears to me that the way in which martyrdom began to be reconceived in the 20th century grew out of a similar dynamic of dialectical conversation. We can hope that the difference between these communities which was a source of violence 2000 years ago can, today, be a source of mutual understanding within that difference.

Contemporary Jewish-Christian liberationist dialogue around the nature of martyrdom need not be merely a naive new start, because we can draw upon the liberationist examples of the praxis of our predecessors. As Lundberg notes, Bonhoeffer, the first Christian who proposed the new concept of martyrdom that Lundberg himself is offering, did so while confronting the Jewish Holocaust. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer's approach resurfaced in the deep relationship that Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel shared in America during the 60s, as well as the relationship between the Argentine liberation theologians of the non-denominational Protestant Instituto Superior de Educación Teológica and Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer, from the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano, founder of the praxis of a Jewish liberation theology in Latin America during the 70s and early 80s. Keeping in mind Lundberg's recognition of Bonhoeffer as the first person to articulate the "martyrdom of solidarity" model, and reviewing the subsequent heritage of Bonhoeffer's model in both Americas, can thus help us interpret the cross-commonalities in the way Jews and Christians are conceiving martyrdom as being the results of: 1) a common liberationist framework of categories and 2) the way in which martyrdom became a central concept in liberationist dialogue.

In conclusion, we can assert that Lundberg's proposal, the reformulation of Christian martyrdom in light of current social struggles, is revolutionary, not only within his own community, but also in the way in which it opens up dialogue with other faith communities, such as the Jews. My response to Lundberg's paper has focused upon two issues: Jewish martyrdom (traditional pre-1945 and liberationist post-1945) and the new Christian "martyrdom of solidarity". The inherently social commitment of both Jewish and Christian conceptions of martyrdom, as well as their dialogical nature, leads me to insist that various models of martyrdom deserve to be analyzed with respect to the cross-commonalties between both brother/sister traditions. This analysis should be guided by the "first agreement": the right to disagree — in this case, to disagree about what particular models of martyrdom should result from relying upon liberationist conceptions for their construc-

tion. But this analysis should also recognize the collaboration of "the Other" in our own constructions.

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The Blood of the Martyrs Can Be the Seed of Life: Violence, Abuse and the Prophetic Dimension of Theology

DEBRA L. DUKE

As I read the beginning of Mr. Lundberg's paper, with its reference to the early church's understanding of martyrs and the quotation attributed to Tertullian, I was both troubled and intrigued, especially, by this quote regarding the fruitfulness of martyrdom. I was not thinking about the early church and the Roman persecution, however, but rather about the four thousand martyrs each year in our country who are killed by an abusive husband, boyfriend or ex, and the many others, who, while not yet on the coroner's records, have lost their lives to an abuser enduring a *living* death. I also thought of the many children abused physically or sexually by parents, neighbors, relatives, clergy or other adults, so that whether they live or die, their life is taken from them. As I read Lundberg's paper, I wondered how these deaths fit into his discussion of martyrdom and the prophetic dimension of theology.

While I think all types of martyrdom merit reflection and comment, for reasons of space limitations, I will, in my response, focus on domestic violence martyrs. The martyrdoms resulting from other types of abuse are equally worthy of reflection, and are both similar to and different from domestic violence martyrdoms. I can only hope that my extremely focused discussion here might shed a small degree of light on other situations of fatal abuse. Also, because ninety-six percent of domestic violence is male upon female, I will focus upon that particular dynamic in my discussion. This is not to deny that female upon male and same sex domestic violence occurs, because it does. But the vast majority of cases of domestic violence are male upon female.

While domestic violence deaths are not necessarily related to a refusal to apostatize, and would not therefore strictly fit the early church understanding of martyrdom, the classic scenario that Lundberg terms “martyrdom of confession,” points, I believe, to an important type of martyrdom. I agree with Lundberg that, while martyrdoms of confession have been and are significant to the history and witness of the church, they are not the only type of Christian martyrdom. Lundberg describes a second type of martyrdom which he terms “martyrdom of solidarity.” Domestic violence deaths, I will argue, fit within this type of martyrdom.

Domestic violence deaths are deaths inflicted by reason of a hatred of justice and a lust for power and control, just as in the case of martyrs of solidarity. But in the midst of their abuse, abuse victims rarely feel a sense of solidarity with others. Abusers usually work to isolate their victims from potential sources of outside support, weakening their defenses and making them more vulnerable to the abuse. Instead of feeling a sense of solidarity with others, victims of domestic violence often feel a sense of abandonment: abandonment by family, abandonment by community, and abandonment by God. The solidarity which draws and holds an abuse victim captive in their suffering, is the solidarity she desires to have with the predominant culture — a solidarity abuse perpetrators rely upon and foster. Whether she is a United States’ citizen, a Latin American, or a person living in the Middle East, it is the values and beliefs of her culture, including her religion, which draw an abuse victim into an abusive relationship and which keeps her there in spite of the abuse. Hers is a solidarity with culture which upholds the “sanctity” of marriage, the greater authority of the male, and the need for a woman to be taken care of. She longs for a sense of solidarity with a culture which glorifies coupledness and family life — a culture which is suspicious, at best, of singleness. For her, solidarity with culture means the acceptance of an outlook on marriage which shames, blames and often scapegoats the weaker partner. It is solidarity with a culture which minimizes domestic violence and avoids getting involved in defending its victims. The domestic violence martyr, isolated from direct solidarity with others, seeks solidarity through identifying with her culture. Her repeated hopes and attempts to make her life “right” are her attempts to be in solidarity with her culture, and thus with other people.

Martyrs of abuse may not have worked in solidarity with others, but they have struggled for justice and right relationship in their own lives. Theirs is a solidarity with truth and righteousness and love. They have tried every-

thing they could think of to improve their relationship with their abuser, in hopes that the abuse would stop. They want to believe in justice and righteousness, and to believe that if they act righteously that they will be truly loved, loved in a just way. In their lives, they act out their confession of their belief in forgiveness, true love, patience, and hope. Some see a clear connection between their actions or inactions, and their faith. Others, if asked, would not name the connection between their actions or inactions and their faith. In this way, they are like Ellacuria's and Sobrino's 'crucified people.' They are part of a larger impersonal power struggle. They are 'killed' by the forces of sin, a powerful reminder of the effect of violence, injustice, and the lust for power in our society.

While fitting within the typology of the unified martyrdoms of confession and solidarity as Lundberg has described them, perhaps these 'deaths' are more appropriately called prophetic martyrdoms. These martyrs serve as prophets, daring — sometimes — in their deaths, to do what they perhaps could not do in their lives, that is, to speak of a reality that we, as a society and as the church, do not want to see. As prophets, that is, as speakers of God's truth, these martyrs bring God's witness, God's judgment, upon the church. And they call us to respond.

Let us consider the parallels and differences between martyrs in abusive situations and the martyrdoms discussed in Lundberg's paper. As in the martyrdoms of confession and solidarity, beliefs play a strong role in the deaths of domestic violence martyrs. Many women stay in abusive situations because of a complex web of beliefs based upon certain attitudes about the sanctity of marriage, the sinfulness of divorce, the need for a wife to submit to her husband, the need all women have for a man, love overcoming evil, retributive justice, the omnipotent power of God to help and protect her, her own sinfulness and culpability, and the model of Jesus as the suffering servant. Sadly, too many women stay because even when they do reach out for help from a pastor or friend, this belief system based upon these attitudes is only reinforced. Too often women are encouraged to try harder to make the marriage work, to pray more often, to work harder to submit, to be more like Jesus, and to suffer to make their relationship work. Women are even blamed for the actions of their abuser, as if there were something a woman could do stop the abuse — or as if the abuse were caused by something they had done. Abused women often repeatedly forgive their abuser, hoping that he will change and that the love he professes is real. Victims of domestic abuse stay because they long for the love and respect their culture

and the abuser say comes from love relationships, and they fear what might happen if they leave.

The domestic violence victim is a martyr who is killed, in part, because of her commitment to beliefs, beliefs prevalent in our culture and still upheld in too many churches. I would doubt that all of the beliefs the typical domestic violence victim operates on fall within what Lundberg calls the "true faith," but beliefs that love will ultimately overpower evil, that one ought to forgive, even repeatedly, that one ought to seek to remedy one's own sinfulness first, and that right behavior in the face of suffering and oppression will be rewarded, are certainly traditional Christian concepts. What is more, many domestic violence victims do take responsibility for their abuse, believing that if they could only try harder and live more righteously, the abuse would stop. Some even go so far as to believe that the abuse is somehow deserved because of something they have done. Many struggle to live by what they have been taught and have come to know as the "true faith," and to reconcile their abuse with these beliefs.

In light of this, Lundberg's discussion of the essential unity of the martyrdoms of confession and solidarity is quite striking. The unity Lundberg finds is that in both cases the martyr "is killed for attempting to maintain the true faith . . . in the face of forces that are hostile . . ." to it. Lundberg does not define "true faith," but I would argue that the victim of any abuse, domestic or otherwise, is killed while attempting to cling to an important basic tenet of the "true faith," one which their abusers work to deny, that is, the belief that each human life is a unique, individual and valued creation of God. Abusers could not do what they do if they truly affirmed this basic tenet. Victims of violence, whether domestic, sexual, or any other kind, dare to cling to this basic tenet - that they are an individual self and that they have value, rights, and liberties all their own. Their risk of being killed increases as their assertion of this belief increases.

Strikingly, and appropriately for this discussion, Lundberg, in his explanation of this unity in the martyrdoms, uses the feminine pronoun. He writes, "in both cases the person martyred puts herself in this situation actively, but then passively accepts violence and death, rather than doing what is required to put herself out of harm's way." How true this is of domestic violence victims!! A domestic violence victim puts herself willingly and actively into the relationship. She actively accepts those beliefs proclaimed as Christian, (or Jewish, or Confucian, etc.) which serve to keep her in the violent relationship. And because of her firm commitment to those beliefs

and to the community which holds them before her, and because of her desire to be in solidarity with her community, she will not and can not do what it would take for her to remove herself from harm's way, and thus, literally, save her life.

Domestic violence victims not only share a commonality with other types of martyrs through passive acceptance of suffering, but they also share a similarity with prophets. The prophetic cycle as described in this paper, which is based on the Hebrew Scriptures, parallels the usual abuse cycle for domestic violence situations. The prophetic cycle begins with a denunciation of sin. The abuse cycle begins with an escalating tension stage, in which the victim is criticized, denounced and put down. The second element in the prophetic cycle is the announcement of judgment. In the abuse cycle, the escalating tension stage often results in threats being made to hurt the victim or those she loves, and it usually culminates in a major abusive event, in which the abuser's judgment is brought down upon her. The third stage of the prophetic cycle is the call to repentance, an invitation to return to right relationship with God. In the abuse cycle, the repentance stage can take one of two forms. Often the abuser will become contrite, apologizing and promising to never do "it" again, seemingly bringing the couple back into right relationship with one another. Alternatively, the abuser may blame the victim for the abuse, forcing her contrition. Similarly, he may deny that the abuse happened or that it was as bad as it seemed, suggesting that through her 'repentance,' that is, through her denial of her experience, she can make the relationship right. In any case, the victim is led to have hope that through repentance, the abuse will not happen again, either because he has repented and changed, or because she has taken responsibility for his actions and hopes, therefore, that she can do something to keep it from happening again. As in the prophetic cycle, this repentive stage leads to a fourth and final stage of hope for a better time and a better life.

While the cycles certainly have their differences, I believe that the uncanny similarities between the biblical prophetic cycle and the domestic abuse cycle make it difficult for both the domestic violence victim, and for us, to recognize abuse cycles for what they are. Renita Weems has pointed out that in many of the marriage metaphors in the prophetic literature, God is depicted as the innocent and righteous husband and Israel as the whoring or otherwise immoral wife. These metaphors only serve to further cloud our understanding of domestic violence, by subtly injecting stereotypes and limited possibilities into our cultural ethos. In Scriptural texts such as Hosea

and Jeremiah, the husband is presented as justified in threatening violence, abuse and even death to his wife. (Weems 1995:44-50) These texts serve to influence our thinking as to “what is true, real or possible” as well as what is theologically justifiable. (Weems 1995:115-116)

In light of this, it is not surprising that domestic violence victims struggle to be heard. Just as the uncredentialed prophets struggled to be heard, domestic violence victims’ reports are too often not understood for what they are. They are discounted as mere domestic quarrels or as personal matters. As the Old Testament prophets found, when one speaks against the dominant culture, one often is discounted or even attacked and blamed. Domestic violence victims, like victims of other forms of abuse, are often blamed either for the reality of their abuse or for telling about it.

In this way, abuse victims are like Jesuanic martyrs in that they bear witness to reality. If not in her life, then in her death, the domestic violence martyr points to injustice in our society, a society that does not adequately protect women and children from battering and abuse in their own homes. If not in her life, then in her death, she also points to religious syncretism and the misuse of the cult. In American culture, this often means using Christianity to perpetuate the oppression of women in our society via the assumption that the Bible teaches the subordination of women to men. It means, therefore, using Christian scriptures and tradition to encourage unequal, and even lethal, power relations between partners in a supposed love relationship. If not in her life, then in her death, the domestic violence martyr points to the reality of the church’s and society’s failure to recognize domestic violence for what it is and to “. . . tell the truth about that reality, search out its causes, and ask what the gospel says about that reality. . . .” (Lundberg 2004:16)

I greatly appreciate Lundberg’s discussion of the hermeneutics of martyrdom. Martyrs are not always perceived as martyrs by everyone. If the truth their lives and deaths speak has not been widely heard, and if the reality they represent is not completely known, martyrs often wind up being blamed as somehow responsible for their own deaths. “She must have done something to deserve this.” We’ve heard it all before: “She made me so mad I couldn’t help myself,” or “The boys had an eating disorder, that’s why they were so underweight,” or “She asked for it with the way she dressed,” Lundberg rightly says that “the martyrs can offer no credentials.” Opacity when dealing with people’s lives is such a constraint. Yet, silent acquiescence on our part to the daily martyrdom of domestic violence victims and other victims of

abuse allows us to avoid looking at the role of power and greed, of violence and abuse, in our society. It allows us to avoid looking at sin — individual sin and corporate sin — and its effect on our society and on each one of us.

The one caution I would like to offer in response to Lundberg's thoughts is a warning against expecting that martyrdom can be valued only in analogy with Christ's death. The parallels Lundberg points out between the prophetic cycle and the life of Jesus are useful. However, just as hope in the Old Testament prophetic texts came not from anyone's death, but from the generous mercy of God toward those who had turned their lives toward God, so too in Jesus' life, hope comes from the merciful and salvific actions of God. The glorification of Christ's suffering and death is too often a contributing factor in domestic violence martyrdoms, and when used in this way, is not salvific. The life-giving power of domestic violence martyrs' lives and deaths is found in their potential to help us recognize and name the problems of power, greed, violence and gender bias in our society. Their deaths do not reproduce anything salvific, but they do offer us a warning. They are like prophetic martyrs, speaking in their deaths a word of truth, which they could not speak for long in their lives. The most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence is the forty-eight hours after she first reaches out for help or tries to leave. She is much more likely to be killed during this time when she has prophetically dared to name the reality she has lived. If not in their lives, then in their deaths, domestic violence martyrs proclaim that violence and abuse does exist in *our* society, in ways — and to degrees — that we don't recognize, and don't confront.

The deaths of domestic abuse victims are not, in and of themselves, salvific. But our response to their deaths can be salvific. In the early church, as Lundberg points out, the death of the martyrs did not have "their intended effect - the destruction of the fledgling Church. Rather, in some inexplicable fashion, they only energized the ones they were intended to frighten and disperse, and the church grew." The early martyrs became not just murder victims, but martyrs, because of the response of those who *remained*. The response of those who witnessed these deaths, who saw them for what they really were, insured that violent intimidators did not have their way.

When we in American culture today witness deaths from domestic violence, do we see mere "victims" — participants in a domestic squabble? That, I believe, is the key choice for the theologian and for the church. Will we hear the prophetic witness of the martyrs of domestic violence and then respond with compassion and action, or will we be silenced by the intimidators? As

Lundberg says, the martyrs' lives and deaths are "a hermeneutical lens that enables further understanding of the world and the Christian faith." Will we use the lens they offer us to see more fully? As Jon Sobrino says in his article in the newly published *Rethinking Martyrdom*, the masses who suffer and die around the world daily, the 'crucified people,' "summon to conversion." They "keep the question of theodicy alive" and "in doing so they force us also to take the reality of our world seriously." (2003: 21-22) Can we as theologians, and as a church, stand in the "prophetic sphere of martyrdom" to reflect on domestic violence "martyrdom as it relates to the church's witness in the public realm?" Will we dare to stand *with* these martyrs and *against* all forms of domestic violence? Will we dare to consider how we as the church have both tacitly and overtly supported domestic violence? Will we dare to consider how historical interpretations of the Scriptures have encouraged domestic violence?

Clergy are among the top four professions, along with professional athletes, military and the police, who are perpetrators of domestic violence. When will we, as the church, dare to confront this? Those of us who "remain" can choose to take action in partnership with God, bringing God's hope and transformation of life. Only then will the blood of domestic violence martyrs become the seed of life. As Lundberg has written, "in confronting martyrdom we confront an undeniable witness to the truth. And only with such witness to the truth, . . . do we stand within the sphere of the prophetic."

I thank Mr. Lundberg for this stimulating paper, and I challenge all of us to dare to confront the martyrdoms of abuse, that is, to confront the physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse of the weaker members of our communities and of our world. It is only through our daring to stand in the prophetic sphere — and through our responding courageously to domestic violence martyrs — that the blood of these martyrs will become the seed of life, the seed for a new way of life in God's realm.

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Martyrdom in Context: Implications for Conflict Resolution

PUSHPA IYER

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN POST-COLD WAR CONFLICTS

Intractable conflicts have become an enduring feature of the Cold War period. Kriesberg et. al. (1989) conceptualize *intractable* conflicts as those that resist attempts at resolution. In these conflicts, both sides disagree even about what a solution might look like — since “solutions” are matters of perception and context. This type of extended, multi-faceted conflict involves psychosocial process which include three characteristics: (1) resistance to being resolved, (2) conflict-intensifying features not directly related to the initial issues in contention, (3) a high level of hostility involving attempts to harm the other party. The current conflicts between the Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East could thus both be labeled intractable.

When the Cold War period came to an end many people, say Taras and Ganguly (2000), hoped for the end of such intractable conflicts and the beginning of a new era in history. Unfortunately, the absence of Cold War checks and balances, and the resurgence of local power in nation-states which had formerly been pawns of the superpowers, have instead exacerbated internal conflicts which have erupted and exploded — with plenty of violence. When these conflicts have arisen in contexts of poverty, illiteracy, population explosion, malnutrition, environmental degradation, and inadequate infrastructure and resources, they have become even more *interlocked* and *protracted*. According to Kriesberg (1981) *interlocked conflicts* involve more parties than merely the two primary adversaries. In such conflicts, the two “sides” are not mutually exclusive, that is, relationships are maintained between the sub-groups of one “side” and the sub-groups of the other “side”

— relationships that exist apart from the conflictual interactions between the two main adversaries. Interests cut across conflict groups. Various issues receive salience during various periods of time. The conflicts between Iraq, the US, the allies of the US, and the Arab world are thus interlocked conflicts. Edward E. Azar (1990) uses the term *protracted* to describe longterm, intractable conflicts that are inter-locked with so many issues that the core dispute may have changed from the issues originally at stake. The classic example is the USA-USSR confrontation between 1945 and 1990. Another one is the conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Much of the violence in the above-mentioned contexts of poverty, illiteracy, etc. can be described as *structural* rather than *physical*. Johan Galtung (1969) coined the term *structural violence* to describe the violence imbibed through the social structure in contexts where no clear violent relationship between subject and object is apparent. *Direct violence*, in contrast, involves an obvious relationship of violence between perpetrator and victim. Structural violence, while primarily covert, may manifest itself at times in varying degrees of overtly violent behavior. At other times it becomes the root of other protracted social conflicts. John Burton (1987) describes structural violence as the denial of basic human needs. Because structural violence is perpetuated through the norms, traditions, and beliefs of the elites and are imposed by them upon those below, it helps maintain a social system in which the basic needs of all are not met. These norms, traditions, and beliefs manifest themselves in the institutions in the system. The covert, structural nature of much post-Cold War violence and conflict only adds to the difficulty of finding resolution.

An interesting feature of most intractable, interlocked, protracted conflicts is the way in which religion gets tied to them as an issue. One example is conflict in Kashmir: a territorial conflict between India and Pakistan that often gets presented as a conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Another example is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: a land dispute that is often misrepresented as a conflict between the Palestinian/Arab/Muslim world and the Jews.

According to T.K. Oommen (2001), when religion is seen as independent of states, nations and ethnicity, it is rarely a distinct source of violence. It would be safe to say that in modern times no conflicts have been purely religious. However, when religion is framed as inextricably bound up with the other elements in society, that is, when it gets tied to land, ethnicity, language, borders and nations, it becomes the single most important source of

division and polarization. (Friedland and Hecht 1998). Examples of this are the rise of Hindu Nationalist movement in India, the Iraq-US conflict, and the conflict in Northern Ireland. Much as I would like to argue that the events of the 11th of September, 2001 in the US were simply one more unfortunate and sad event on this planet, the reality is that these events have indeed changed the manner in which conflicts are being categorized and the manner in which some religious groups are being characterized as parties in particular conflicts.

The particular perspective on the relationship between religion and conflict out of which I am writing is explained by Friedland and Hecht's analysis of the conflicts in India and Israel (1998). They see these conflicts as situations in which both the causes and effects of religious struggles are political as well as social. If we look at most of the conflicts around us today, it seems that religion more often than not ends up being a tool that is used by groups that are more powerful and more numerous in order to manipulate, mobilize, oppress and suppress whole communities of people. Violence is almost a natural fallout in such conflicts. Religion, more often than not, is what then divides people. These conflicts thus become not only protracted, inter-locked and intractable but also *deep-rooted*¹ in the sense of involving not merely the self-interests of individuals and groups, but their deep motivations, values and needs (Burton 1987). They seem to defy all attempts at resolution.

The approach to post-Cold War conflicts (and the role of religion within these conflicts) which I have outlined above will serve as the theoretical framework for my response to Matthew Lundberg's paper: "*The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of Life: Liberation Theology, Martyrdom, and the Prophetic Dimension of Theology*". Martyrdom has been a basic Christian experience. Within the Christian scriptures, the word "martyr" means "witness," and martyrs are witnesses who confess their faith before the powerful of the world, and face their judgment. Lundberg does well to draw an analogous relationship between the martyrs of solidarity and the original martyrs (defined as martyrs of confession). This is definitely a step in the direction of making theology more inclusive.

¹ According to Burton, the consequences of deep-rooted conflicts are serious in magnitude. These conflicts may seem endless (protracted) and are invariably linked to more than one issue (inter-locked).

THE FAILURE OF LUNDBERG'S THEOLOGICAL LENS TO PERCEIVE NONRELIGIOUS MARTYRS FOR JUSTICE

Lundberg's paper raises two major concerns for me. The first one is that he provides no space for us to consider concepts or examples of martyrdom that may not be visible from the narrow confines of a theological lens. His paper therefore leaves out many other kinds of martyrs, two of which I will highlight here. His definitions of martyrs of confession and martyrs of solidarity are very much rooted in the Christian tradition, and so are the examples of martyrs he provides (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Archbishop Romero, the slain priests and nuns of El Salvador, and Martin Luther King).

For Lundberg, a death becomes a martyrdom when it reproduces the dynamics of the crucifixion of Christ. Lundberg mentions five of these dynamics: 1) the martyr is killed in the face of apostasy or while standing up for justice, 2) she or he submits willingly to death at the hands of others (who are usually more powerful), 3) she or he dies calmly with thoughts not on his or her own suffering and imminent death but on God — and on forgiving the murderers, 4) the death somehow recapitulates Christ's resurrection, and 5) the death somehow effects an important element of salvation.

In the context of a paper written within the field of Christian theology there is nothing wrong with these definitions. However, only a few of the deaths in the world today which get labeled as martyrdoms would be recognized and valued as such if one were to rely solely upon these five criteria. The reasons people embrace martyrdom today are not limited to defending their religious faith or to accepting death instead of apostasy — the motivations behind what Lundberg calls "martyrs of confession." And their reasons are even more complex than the reasons for martyrdom which Lundberg attributes to the people he calls "martyrs of solidarity." Some contemporary martyrs exist outside of any faith tradition. Others may hold a religious faith as a very personal matter, but be thrown into the arena of martyrdom because they have entered into a conflict or struggle for political, economic and social motives. I will briefly discuss two ways of conceiving martyrdom which fall outside Lundberg's definition of martyrdom, which I believe have motivated various contemporary martyrs for justice. I am calling these two modes *strategic martyrdom* and *activist martyrdom*². It is important to

² The two models of martyrdom mentioned here are terms coined by the author.

note that in both of these conceptions of martyrdom faith (religion) plays a only a limited role.

TWO CONCEPTIONS OF MARTYRDOM IN WHICH RELIGION PLAYS A HIGHLY LIMITED ROLE

1) Strategic Martyrdom

This perspective sees martyrdom as death or some other form of suffering which is endured to achieve goals that may be political, social or economic in nature. Martyrdom (in whatever form) is, under this model, a strategic tool used to achieve specific objectives. It is not something that simply comes along the way. Gandhi's perspective on martyrdom is one of the best ways of understanding this model.

Gandhi advocated a school for martyrs. He said: "Just as one must learn the art of killing in training for violence, so also one must learn the art of dying in the training of non-violence" (Smith 1997:274). However, says Smith, the Gandhian notion of martyrdom is different from the usual understanding of martyrdom in the West, and from the way martyrdom is understood in some faith traditions. Always the shrewd political strategist, Gandhi wanted to make martyrdom his political tool or else it was of no use to him. He took into consideration very seriously the core flaw in using martyrdom as a political strategy that McGinley (1970:38) pointed out: "to be a martyr is easy. You only have to be it once." This makes it impossible as a political weapon says Smith (1997:266) for "it may project its practitioner into heaven but it leaves the battlefield empty and rarely does it have a prolonged or practical consequence."

Gandhi thus, through his strategic approach, added a new dimension to ways in which martyrdom can be viewed. Ends and means were interchangeable for him. So as important as death was (although he did not want to die in his struggle), the style and control over oneself in life were equally important. And the circumstances under which life was being given up were even more important (Smith 1997). The real martyr for Gandhi was not one who was just willing to die but one who transformed the act (there may be a hint of suicide in this) into a positive act of heroism and thus re-energized all the people around this death. Gandhi, therefore, seemed to emphasize that death (martyrdom) should be an end in itself (Smith 1997). It needed to cre-

ate an impact, an effect, and bring some change — or else it was a another wasteful loss of life.

Gandhi believed that one had to earn martyrdom, not just accept death. Fasting was a political tool that Gandhi used for martyrdom. People from all faiths understand fasting. It involves inflicting some form of suffering on one's self. But for Gandhi, drawing from his own personal faith, it was a method of self-purification, and it also prepared him for a closer association with God (Smith 1997).

For Gandhi, a fast was a means to an end. Many times, through fasting, he inflicted suffering on himself and played brinkmanship with his life. But he would not squander his life for something unattainable. His demands when fasting for days on end were never the seemingly unattainable ones such as "the British must leave India". According to Smith (1997:293), Gandhi's fasting had the same shock effect the cross had, but this messiah did not have to die. In this way, Gandhi overcame the weakness of the cross – death. Millions of India's starving population could identify with fasting — and then could rejoice when the Mahatma took his first nourishment.

Gandhi was a man of deep faith, very religious in his orientation. He was firmly a Hindu, but borrowed heavily from Christianity. Working among a very diverse population, his political strategy was very secular and non-sectarian. He saw God in humanity and encouraged others around him to identify their God in humanity. Smith (1997) argues that Gandhi's political strategy for martyrdom came primarily from Hinduism and Christianity. Borrowing the model of *Sanyasi* from Hinduism (the renunciation of all worldly pleasures — the idea closest to martyrdom in Hinduism) and the ideal of service to humanity from Christianity, he gave shape to his own theoretical model of martyrdom.

The most important aspect of the way Gandhi modeled strategic martyrdom is his insistence that "to obtain martyrdom, one should not just be willing to die but should have gone through a process of self purification, should have practiced non-violence in thought, word and deed, and should be ready to give up one's life for humanity, not just for *salvation*". (Smith 1997:274). It would be unusual to find a pure form of Gandhian martyrdom today. Yet, there are many who have borrowed some of his ideas to support their struggle for justice. An example is the mass student resistant movement (OTPOR) against Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, as portrayed in the documentary film "Bringing Down a Dictator".

2) Activist Martyrdom

According to this model, martyrs are activists drawn from the ranks of all those men and women who struggle to bring justice and who are on the side of the oppressed and the suppressed, that is to say, those who take on the more powerful —sometimes their own people — in order to bring justice to all. Thus this model sees martyrs as people who would willingly give up their lives, or who would willingly live and suffer, all for a cause.

Some of the activists who ascribe to this model of martyrdom may be secular, but many of them in their private life ascribe to a religion and may even draw their strength for the struggle for justice from their faith. Yet in their public life, religion has no role. They would accept death in the name of justice or humanity, not simply in the name of God. Their goal is rarely individual salvation.

Medha Patkar and her fiery team members of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) in India are examples of the type of activists that can end up becoming martyrs. While fighting the governments of three states as well as the central government of India on the construction of the huge dam over the Narmada river, and while seeking compensation and rehabilitation of the millions displaced, Patkar and her team members have at various times over the years sought martyrdom.

Patkar has very often used the Gandhian tool of fasting to seek martyrdom. She and her colleagues have fasted repeatedly in protest against government policies concerning the construction of the dam. They have inflicted great pain and suffering upon themselves. Sometimes they have collapsed completely, and have been moved to the hospital for forcible treatment. They have expressed openly their willingness to die for their cause. Over the decades, however, their movement has clearly felt the need for more drastic measures to bring social justice to the people and to make a point to the rest of the world. In 2003 an NBA member, along with a few villagers, opted for *jal samadhi*. They sat down peacefully on the land that was going to be submerged by the dam waters and were drowned in peaceful protest. At this point their model of martyrdom moved from being the means to achieve an end to becoming an end in itself.

This example under this model is a lot similar to the strategic model described above. But the prime difference is the fact that the members of NBA do not bring the language of their faith into their public life and into their struggle for justice. Their vocabulary is replete with words about human rights and social justice, not words about God and salvation. The other ma-

jor difference between the two models described above is that under strategic martyrdom, the ends and means (that is, the political/ social goals and the goal of martyrdom) are interchangeable while under activist martyrdom, the act ultimately remains an end. Under the first model, martyrdom itself is a political strategy and giving it shape becomes the ultimate goal. On the other hand, activist martyrs use it as a tool to achieve their final goal. The two models of martyrdom above differ from the models of "martyrs of confession" and "martyrs of solidarity" defined by Lundberg in two primary ways: 1) faith or religion is not the primary driving element in martyrdom, and 2) the ultimate goal is not salvation. However, Lundberg does touch upon the fact that there are options other than actual death to be sought by those desiring to "witness" with the totality of their lives when he talks of living martyrdom near the end of his paper. This is a useful way of broadening the understanding of martyrdom, I believe.

LUNDBERG'S OVEREMPHASIS OF THE ROLE RELIGION SHOULD PLAY IN RECOGNIZING MARTYRS FOR JUSTICE

My second concern with Lundberg's paper is of a more serious nature. His over-emphasis on the role that religion (essentially Christianity) should play in bestowing the mantle of martyrdom on individuals could, I think, end up making conflicts more protracted, interlocked, intractable and deep-rooted. I am very uncomfortable with his seeming assumption that it is only by looking through the lens of a particular theologian's perspective, or from the circumscribed boundaries of the field of theology as a whole, that people can gain an understanding of martyrdom and thus recognize true martyrs. This approach does nothing to help humanity move towards resolution of the many types of conflicts discussed earlier. To substantiate this point I will discuss current suicide bombing strategy used in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Even though suicide is prohibited under various religions including Islam, there are times when suicide bombing receives support and is even sanctioned by religion. This is primarily because, as noted by Brooks (2002), in many violent conflicts there reaches a point where all pain, suffering, and endurance become directed toward a single-minded pursuit for that final victory. At that point, says Brooks (2002:18), martyrdom becomes not just a means, but an end.

Clearly, in the case of the Palestinians, there is a sense of despair and hopelessness that drives them towards using suicide bombing as a weapon of terror. According to *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion* (1998:494), it is the weaker of the antagonists that produces martyrs. One could, of course, debate about what makes each party in a particular struggle stronger or weaker.

While the rest of the world may call these suicide bombers militants, the Islamic world insists upon bestowing on them the title of martyr. It is clear from Davis's analysis (2003:9) that one has to accept that the concept of martyrdom in Islam is very different from the way it is understood in the West. In Islam the concept of martyrdom, *shahada*, can only be understood in the light of the Islamic concept of holy struggle, *jihad*. (Ezzati 1986). Martyrdom in Islam is associated with the idea of witness or testimony. In fact, the word for martyr in Arabic has the same root as the word *shahada* – meaning to witness or testify, similar to the New Testament Greek roots of the word *martyr* which lies behind Lundberg's definitions of martyrs of solidarity and martyrs of confession. The death of the suicide bomber reproduces all the dynamics of Christ on the Cross except for the fact that the suicide bomber kills other people in willingly embracing his/ her own death, while the martyrs of confession or solidarity coming from the Western world are essentially pacifists. Grasping this basic difference in how martyrdom is conceived of in the contemporary West and how many contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim scholars are urging the Islamic world view of martyrdom, could go a long way in understanding the disagreements over whether a suicide bomber is a militant or a martyr. Of course the subject is more complex than what is simply described here, since one may argue that some types of suicide bombers are more criminal in their objectives than those fighting for causes similar to the Palestinian struggle.

I fear that Lundberg's paper offers us no help whatsoever in understanding suicide bombing, a type of martyrdom that simply cannot be recognized as such if we stay within the narrow confines of the five criteria for martyrdom which he derives from Christian theology. I thus find the following quote from Lundberg's paper a particular cause for concern: "Though, as Sobrino insists, the contemporary martyrdoms do shed light on the cross of Christ, the interpretive priority must rest with the cross of Jesus. Otherwise the cross of Christ could easily become the subsequent justification for many types of 'martyrs', some of which may not be as Christian as others". He goes on to

elaborate that it is the cross that enables contemporary martyrdoms to retain their proper character as witnesses to Christ.

If, as Lundberg suggests, we let the Christian cross alone bestow the mantle of martyrdom on individuals, then it seems that anyone outside of this Western faith tradition who achieves martyrdom according to the tenets of his or her own faith would be branded with some other less honorable title. The reverse would also hold true. Given the current context of a world full of conflicts, it does not seem to make sense to let each religion define, and have the power to bestow, the title of martyr on its own people alone. If we keep in mind all that was said in the beginning of this paper about the role religion seems to play in the conflicts today, and the fact that death and dying for a cause is rampant, the debate may well end up being one of semantics – martyr or freedom fighter or terrorist or traitor? A soldier? A political activist? A social activist? Or just a fool? Isn't one man's martyr another's traitor? Isn't one man's freedom fighter another man's terrorist?

But that would end up being a very simple debate. Ultimately, it would become a debate among religions, with each religion becoming more and more and exclusive instead of inclusive. Religious inclusivity is what the world needs today. This paper began by arguing that violent post-Cold War conflicts are not necessarily about religion but about other issues such as nationality, ethnicity, land, and politics and it seems to me that if we: 1) analyze these powerful and important contemporary issues only within the narrow confines of each religion's perspective, and 2) define martyrdom only according to the doctrinal perspectives of each religion, we will in fact end up making these conflicts purely "religious" ones! This would not help. Religion involves deep beliefs and values that cannot be easily given up or compromised upon. In a conflict situation, exclusive religious claims will likely ensure that more passion will be whipped up — passion that will take us further and further from resolution.

It seems as if the need of the hour is some kind of dialogue between these different theological worlds rather than for each one to continue to think exclusively within its own box. Martyrdom has to be situated within such a context of inclusive religious discussion today. It is imperative that we do so if we want to bring peace in the world.

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Why Love so Thoroughly Crushed by Evil is Not Fully Extinguished¹

RUBÉN ROSARIO-RODRÍGUEZ

I am flattered to be asked to respond to my colleague Matt Lundberg's excellent essay entitled "The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of Life." It is a masterful analysis and presentation of the development of Latin American liberation theology into a theology of martyrdom that raises several key challenges for theological construction in the North American context. Given the time constraints of our forum format, I will briefly state my three biggest concerns with Jon Sobrino's *martyrology* as presented in Matt's paper without discussing any single concern in great detail in the hopes of stimulating further conversation.

First, I am concerned about the risk of bifurcating theology from ethics when defining martyrdom for the present age. Sobrino distinguishes between *Jesuanic Martyrs*—those who willingly embrace a life of solidarity with the poor and oppressed in a struggle to overcome the forces of death (and in the process often losing their life)—and the *crucified people*—the great masses who are the anonymous victims of greed and repression, and who "do not actively give up their lives in the defense of the faith" (Sobrino 2003:132). Matt refines this typology further by distinguishing Sobrino's contemporary forms of martyrdom (which he calls *martyrdom of solidarity*) from the type of martyrdom prevalent in the early Church (which he classifies as *martyrdom of confession*): "It is for confessing Christ or for believing some piece of orthodox doctrine regarding Christ that a martyr of confession is killed." He then discusses three modern martyrs—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, and Oscar Romero—and concludes "these martyrs died not

¹Apologies to Cornel West for borrowing this beautiful phrase describing the tenacity of Christian faith in the face of great suffering and persecution as the title of my response.

simply on account of their confession of Christian faith or some aspect of doctrine. Rather, their deaths were the result of their solidarity with the oppressed and the decisions they made as a result." I contend that the political acts of solidarity made by these three great men of the twentieth century were the direct result of their doctrinal commitments. Furthermore, I argue that in order to understand liberation as a properly theological concept—and not just a socio-political possibility—we must view liberation as the will of God. This means that the biblical narratives (as well as the church teachings derived from them) are suffused with the themes of liberation and God's preferential option for the poor. To argue otherwise is to suggest that liberation is an extra-scriptural concept (perhaps derived from Marxism) and therefore not necessary for a proper understanding of the Christian faith. I explore this theme at great length in my dissertation, where I consider the emancipatory potential of doctrine over against the modern suspicion of tradition and doctrine. At the moment, however, I simply want to draw attention to the danger of using descriptive categories that isolate acts of solidarity from the act of confession: a concern voiced by Matt in the first part of his article but which I feel bears repeating.

Second, I share the concerns of some feminist and Womanist theologians that Jon Sobrino's emphasis on redemptive suffering may actually impede historical liberation. The danger is that so strong an emphasis on martyrdom can lead to fetishism, making death and self-sacrifice objects of devotion separate from the acts of solidarity and confession that give the martyrs' suffering its salvific meaning. Lundberg recognizes the ambiguity of redemptive suffering by citing the example of the early Church as a time when it became "increasingly difficult to differentiate between suicide and martyrdom." Jon Sobrino is also aware of this possibility but insists that we must not interpret the recent emphasis on martyrdom as a change of direction in liberation theology. Instead, he argues that liberation has always implied the possibility of martyrdom and, more importantly, martyrdom cannot be understood apart from the liberation process.

It is not a matter of abandoning liberation in favor of martyrdom, nor yet of simply juxtaposing them. It is rather about complementarity and mutual clarification, because liberation is weakened if it is separated from the reality of martyrdom, and the reverse is also true. More concretely—and as a matter of principle—martyrdom has to be understood in its essential relation to liberation, both as the negative consequence of a liberation praxis,

and because it endows that praxis with the positive power of light and energy (Sobrino 2003:103).

Still, when Sobrino proclaims the theme of the “crucified people” he is asserting that the crucified people not only bear witness to Christ’s redemptive suffering but also *bring* salvation through their own suffering. This problematic assertion remains under-explored in Matt’s paper, and it warrants much discussion, but for the moment it is enough to draw our attention to it. Matt states that Sobrino’s two types of martyrdom of solidarity (Jesuanic martyrdom and the crucified people) must be understood analogically not univocally, but I remain unconvinced that Sobrino, given his words on the subject, understands contemporary forms of martyrdom this way: “This is the marrow of liberation theology. And what we want to stress now is that the crucified peoples themselves are bearers of salvation” (Sobrino 2003:160).

Finally, I am concerned about the inadequacy of the crucified people as theodicy. In many ways liberation theology is the stepchild of post-Holocaust political theology, as exemplified by the work of Johannes Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, and characterized by the question, “Whether and how it is possible to do theology after Auschwitz?” I agree with Cornel West when he describes Christianity as “first and foremost a theodicy, a triumphant account of good over evil” (West 2002: 35), a claim that resonates with Jon Sobrino’s constant reminder that theology address the overwhelming historical reality of innocent suffering in the present age. However, I find Sobrino’s attempt to give “meaning” to the death of the crucified people problematic because it suggests that, from the perspective of the doctrine of divine providence, God intends for these deaths to happen. This is most evident when he cites Ignacio Ellacuría’s definition of the crucified peoples as the “historical continuation of Yahweh’s servant” (Sobrino 2003:157). Ellacuría embraced the crucified people as the most urgent theological concept for our age because of what it tells us about God’s creation...namely, “creation has turned out badly for God” (Sobrino 2003:155). By this he means that whether or not one views the world from a Christian perspective it cannot be denied that the world is a place of great innocent suffering. Accordingly, Christian theology must reconcile the apparent contradiction between belief in a benevolent and all-powerful God and the existential reality of innocent suffering on such a grand scale. The appeal of liberation theology is that it takes seriously the suffering of the innocent by doing theology from the perspective of the crucified people, it rejects any attempt to understand

this suffering as the will of God, and it makes sense of this suffering by claiming that God makes a preferential option for the innocent victims in order to overturn the historical forces that perpetuate oppression, poverty, and death. The danger of emphasizing the passive martyrdom of the innocent masses over against the active martyrdom of the Jesuanic martyrs is that theology might lose its ethical imperative.

Friedrich Nietzsche, one of Christianity's most ardent critics, showed great insight when he described Christianity as a religion especially fitted to the oppressed. Yet, Nietzsche's caricature of the origin of Christianity as a slave revolt for which Paul and other "priests" provided a metaphysical foundation and superstructure, does not adequately account for the power of hope at the foot of the cross. While acknowledging the legitimacy of Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of Christianity as an ideology of *ressentiment*, we cannot reduce the appeal of Christianity among the world's anonymous poor to this one cause. Christian faith has sustained hope against hope for two millennia. The central Christian mystery is how and why—in the words of Cornel West—"love so thoroughly crushed by evil forces is not fully extinguished" (West 2002:6). Sobrino's response is that contemporary martyrs—killed as a result of their work for liberation—are essential for understanding the cross of Jesus because their struggle reminds us that theology cannot make sense of Jesus' death without reference to his life's work and the content of his preaching. Ironically, Nietzsche illumines what Jon Sobrino means by a theology of liberation and martyrdom:

I go back, I tell the *genuine* history of Christianity. The very word "Christianity" is a misunderstanding: in truth, there was only *one* Christian, and he died on the cross...It is false to the point of nonsense to find the mark of the Christian in a "faith," for instance, in the faith in redemption through Christ: only Christian *practice*, a life such as he *lived* who died on the cross, is Christian (Nietzsche 1954:612).

Here I find an accurate description of Christian martyrdom but remain unconvinced that the concept of the crucified people—especially when applied to those who are not engaged in the work of liberation but are merely the victims of repression—is truly analogous to the martyrdom of Christ or of the Jesuanic martyrs primarily because it lacks moral agency. Yes, the suffering of the crucified people is the awful reality that a prophetic Christianity seeks to expose and positively transform, but this is a far cry from claiming

that their suffering is itself salvific or liberating. It is horrible. It is unspeakable. But it is not the continuation of God's ongoing work of salvation.

CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

In my opinion, the 2003 Fall Forum stimulated some great conversation and challenged all participants to re-think their views on the implications of taking up the cross and following Christ (Matthew 10:37-39). Personally, Matt Lundberg renewed my appreciation for Jon Sobrino's work, especially the need to adapt his views on martyrdom for the North American context. Sobrino challenges the church to recognize God's action in the world *wherever* we find the work of liberation. The church, while a flawed human institution always in need of reformation and renewal, is nonetheless the kingdom of God in our midst, or more accurately, an alternative community that stands in contrast to the world in order to model a new way of being community grounded in relationships of inclusion, mutuality, and reconciliation. However, traditional understandings of the nature and mission of the church—even when grounded in Biblical images of servanthood—have rarely done justice to the radical call of the Gospel. An ecclesiology informed by Jon Sobrino's martyrology is characterized by increased solidarity with our "neighbors," defined as the poor and marginalized (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37). After all, if Christ is present among the poor, the hungry, the sick, and the imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46), the church must also be present among the poor, the hungry, the sick, and the imprisoned. Amen.

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Response to the Respondents

MATTHEW D. LUNDBERG

Now I have the difficult task of responding to five thoughtful responses to my paper—in just a few minutes. Obviously, to do so adequately would be impossible. But I do want to tell the five respondents how grateful I am for their reflections, and how much I appreciate the thought they have given to my proposal, the seriousness with which they have taken it, and the helpful ways in which their responses further the discussion. I will now attempt to respond in a modest way to each of them. Lisa Powell brings some worthy critical concerns to my paper. She thinks that my distinction between the martyrdom of “confession” and the martyrdom of “solidarity” is a flawed distinction that serves to cover up the fact that I am not considering the early martyrs conscientiously enough. Powell is undoubtedly right in some of her contentions. Part of my response to her here is, quite simply, to pass the buck a little bit. My work in tonight’s paper is heavily, perhaps too heavily, dependent on Sobrino’s theology of martyrdom, which focuses on the contemporary martyrs. Furthermore, the distinction between hatred of the faith and hatred of justice is rather common in Catholic liberationist discussions of martyrdom. But since passing the buck gets you only so far, I need to say more.

Powell desires to see more continuity between present and past martyrs. She thinks that my focus on the element of “confession” is too narrow and simplistic because it ends up portraying the early martyrdoms as simply a matter of *verbal* confession. Further, she wonders whether I might not be misusing the Roman Catholic definition of martyrdom by not interpreting its language of “witness” as multidimensionally as she would prefer. On this point I want to say only that the context of the passage I quote in the Catholic Catechism supports an interpretation that focuses on the element of con-

fession and doctrine, although Powell is right that “witness” in itself need not necessarily be taken so narrowly. But I agree with Powell that a hard and fast distinction between these kinds of martyrdoms is impossible. While I agree with Powell that a more comprehensive examination of early church martyrs could only help to improve my argument, I did try in the paper to show the essential unity of the two “kinds” of martyrdom, precisely in a more comprehensive sense of “confession.” The distinction is made for heuristic purposes and as matter of emphasis rather than out of a desire to ossify the examples into two types. The distinction comes from the fact that in the popular Christian mind, I think, martyrdom is often associated with a rather narrow sense of “confession.” To the extent that is indeed the case, “confession” needs to be seen more broadly, and my distinction, despite its potential pitfalls, attempts to *enrich* the classical definition of martyrdom by pointing out the special relevance of the element of solidarity today. In this regard it is notable that despite the compelling case for greater past-present continuity in martyrdom that Powell makes through her survey of early martyr-accounts, the notion of solidarity is not prominent. That seems to me to support the need for the distinction I made, if one bears in mind that it is a distinction rather than a separation.

Powell’s focus on the notion of *imitatio Christi* as the central motif for early Christian martyrdom is certainly commensurate with the basic impulse of Sobrino’s martyrology. Particularly interesting is the point she makes regarding the connection between atonement theories and portrayals of the martyrs. In the early church the salvific effects of Christ’s death were sometimes attributed to the deaths of the martyrs. Sobrino’s anti-Anselmian atonement theology, which approximates the so-called “moral influence” theory as much as anything else, functions the same way for him. Jesus shows the possibility of a life of love, which then becomes possible for others who follow him. That is why Sobrino can talk of the “salvation” brought by the Jesuanic martyrs, even though, as I stated in my paper, I am not sure that such an approach respects the christological priority he always intends. And that is precisely where my worry comes in and the reason why I try to push Sobrino in the direction I do. Maybe I am too much of a Protestant, but my main conviction is that salvation is something that comes from *Christ*, not from ourselves. That is the reason why I attempt to “sacramentalize” the language of “witness” to describe what the martyrs do. Powell portrays my position as a “simple” pointing to Christ, and states that I think the martyrs only give us “eyes to understand” rather than what she calls “authentic glimpses.”

In response, I think that having eyes to understand is consistent with Powell's language of "manifestation" or an "authentic glimpse," *if* what we are talking about is the salvation brought by Christ in the event of his death and resurrection, *and* the means by which this understanding comes about is the very *persons* of the martyrs. Apart from "witness," which I am trying to interpret sacramentally as a kind of participation in which the "sign" by its witness makes present the "signified," I have a hard time understanding what else the martyrs might bring. This sense of "witness" in my view is the *correct* manifestation of the gospel as we should expect it. It is the gospel preached with one's own life, not a replacement of that gospel with one's own life. The "salvation" brought by the martyrs in the sense of the social change their witness furthers is in my view part of the overarching salvific kingdom that Jesus has decisively inaugurated, which in Sobrino's terms comes wholly in grace and on that basis calls for participatory human activity. The martyrs *become* Christ as they witness to him. The way they point us to him is precisely their participation in his reality, a participation which gives us an authentic glimpse of Christ.

Santiago Slabodsky's response points out some interesting convergences between my discussion of martyrdom and certain Jewish understandings. I am happy that he thinks that the kind of theology of martyrdom that emerges out of Christian liberation theology is also relevant to what he calls the post-1945 development of "Constantinian Judaism," especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He makes explicit a point that was often implicit in the distinction between martyrdoms of confession and solidarity. This point is that if we enrich traditional understandings of martyrdom by emphasizing the importance of solidarity as the primary cause for which people are martyred in our world today, it becomes clear that true martyrdom (at least in the Christian sense) is a matter of defending the *other* (either as individual or community) rather than defending one's self. That Slabodsky finds this implication for Jews from my unabashedly christological proposal is significant. But given the other things he says, largely from Daniel Boyarin, this is perhaps to be expected, if indeed Jewish and Christian conceptions of martyrdom were forged through a sometimes violent "conversation" between the sibling traditions, in the first centuries of Christianity and again in the horrors of the 20th century. Although I would not want to say that Bonhoeffer was the first martyr of "solidarity," he is one who quickly comes to mind as showing such solidarity with Jewish victims. This convergence is also explained by what Slabodsky tells us about pre-Holocaust Jewish con-

ceptions of martyrdom, which had a significant, albeit limited, place for the notion of solidarity, even if accepting death was problematic. Slabodsky's point regarding Jewish notions of martyrdom as focusing on accepting the *risk* of death rather than simply *death itself* is also significant. That point shows the divergence brought by the centrality of christology in Christian theology, to state the matter simply. A death that results from a life of love lived for the other is seen as *ultimately* "good" in Christian theology primarily because of the way it witnesses to the death of Christ and therefore awakens hope through its connection with his resurrection. Be that as it may (and I see no reason to downplay the point), I think that Slabodsky takes the right approach here, using this topic as a means for finding a way for Jews and Christians to remain united together in the struggle for justice, despite some enduring disagreements.

Debra Duke brings to our discussion the connection between the question of martyrdom and its positive and negative possibilities with respect to victims of domestic violence. She rightly points to Ellacuría's category of the "crucified people" as the category that best describes victims of such violence. They certainly cannot be considered martyrs of solidarity for, as Duke points out, they feel no solidarity with anyone. Furthermore, their fate comes to them for the most part passively, rather than actively (though perhaps that distinction is too neat in this case). Duke argues that the martyrdoms of domestic abuse are "prophetic" because they point us to an ugly reality in our society that we too easily ignore. And a certain type of "faith" plays a role, for it keeps them in the relationships that eventually destroy them. Furthermore, even though such faith is not, properly speaking, *Christian* faith, the ideological use of Christian themes to justify such a flawed and dangerous belief amongst victims of domestic violence is too important for us to ignore.

Duke shows an interesting parallel between what I have called the "prophetic pattern" and what she calls the "abuse cycle." I do not take her point to be to attempt to disqualify the validity of the prophetic pattern, but to show that the affinity between the two patterns is significant enough that the danger of distortion is very real. Duke also cautions against unqualified appeal to the analogy of the martyrs with the death and resurrection of Jesus, because that analogy has been used as a justification for women to stay in situations of abuse. Nothing salvific comes from their "crosses," just as nothing salvific comes from the deaths of the crucified people. The only "salvific" thing that Duke thinks can come from the victims of abuse is the response that *we* make to their lives in attempting to prevent further cases of abuse. What

Duke indicates is the sometimes slippery distinction between: 1) voluntary suffering that is in some sense redemptive (and therefore part of a healthy and faithful Christian ethic), and 2) suffering which is not redemptive but only *seems* to be — and therefore ought to be resisted by the Christian rather than justified by appeal to the *imitatio Christi*.

This is indeed a difficult problem. Not even an appeal to the fact that Jesus' suffering was voluntarily for the *other* solves the problem, for many women stay in destructive situations for the sake of their spouse or their children. The important thing is that one who puts oneself in a situation of suffering in the hope that it will contribute to some kind of "redemption" should do so with the active attempt to *change* the situation. Just as Ellacuría and Sobrino point out in their descriptions of the "crucified people," situations of domestic violence are simply evil and scandalous. Appeal to martyrdom must not be used to keep such victims trapped in their suffering. The real challenge is to those of us who might help them: those, like the Jesuits and Romero, who have the power to *enter into* the suffering of such people in solidarity with them, with the purpose of changing their situation.

Pushpa Iyer's response comes from the perspective of conflict analysis and resolution theory. She worries that the overwhelmingly theological analysis I give of martyrdom, one that comes only from the viewpoint of Christian faith, may unwittingly have the effect of contributing negatively to the religious dimension of "intractable conflicts" in our world today. Her response seizes upon a problem to which I was only able to devote a short and undoubtedly insufficient footnote, namely, that martyrdom is an issue fraught with difficulties in a world where warring religious truth claims are wedded to horrific violence. This is an important problem that I do not want to minimize, but I am skeptical whether Iyer's suggestion of finding some inter-religious way of "bestowing the mantle of martyrdom" is a realistic solution. I am certainly not against inter-religious dialogue of various sorts, but I am not confident about the prospects of any form of such dialogue that requires the setting aside of the particulars of the participants' own religious commitment, which is what her proposal seems to indicate as the only way forward. Such an approach would seem to appeal to some generic category of "religion" which would then be the basis for any discussion about who qualifies for martyrdom. In a sense it almost appears as if she is suggesting a non-religious understanding of martyrdom.

But, returning to the root of the term, if a martyr is a "witness" of some kind, then a witness to what? For a Christian such as myself, the answer can

be nothing other than the death of Jesus Christ. That is not meant as an exclusionary tactic which hegemonically scoffs at all martyrdom claims from other traditions, but simply as a description of the reality of the matter for Christians. Christians are those who follow Jesus Christ in faith and practice. In my view there can be no responsible discussion of martyrdom for a Christian apart from that focus. That is not to say that Christians cannot participate with persons of other religions in discussions about political problems and potential solutions, including tactics that put one's life in jeopardy. But in that case Christians will not be talking about *martyrdoms*, at least not in the most proper sense of the term from the Christian point of view, but about radically-devoted political activists.

This leads to the first of Iyer's two problems with my paper. She considers it a shortcoming that other kinds of "martyrs" are not visible in the theological lens I have set up. On the one hand I largely agree with her; I simply wonder how it could be otherwise without it ceasing to be a Christian conception of martyrdom. But on the other hand, it may be the case that Christians could recognize in the "strategic" and "activist" martyrs a further removed sense of martyrdom on the basis of Christ as critical norm for the analogical understanding of nonChristian martyrs. Take someone like Gandhi: Were many of his actions "Christ-like"? Did he act as he did out of genuine love for oppressed persons? Were many of his actions ones that Christians should themselves perform in similar situations? The answer to these questions would have to be "yes." Did the course of Gandhi's life and death follow analogically the course of Jesus' life and death? The answer to that would have to be a "yes and no." Did Gandhi do this out of commitment to Christ? The answer is "no." There is enough here that some Christians might regard Gandhi as a kind of martyr, simply because he died in the course of a worthy struggle, and that is perhaps an indication of how the term "martyr" is thrown around indiscriminately even within the Christian church. But in the most proper Christian sense of the term, Gandhi would obviously not be regarded as a martyr. It is only in a further removed, analogous sense that Gandhi could be considered a martyr.

Once again, in strictly Christian terms, I would want to reserve the most proper sense of martyrdom, without necessarily restricting the analogical and common-language uses of the term, for a death that comes out of a certain kind of life—a life of following Jesus. Iyer is rightly concerned about uses of religion and the concept of "martyrdom" to support dubious political strategies and ends, including those in which the "martyr's" death

includes the deaths of many others whom most of us regard as innocent. My insistence on the christological critical norm as the way for Christian theology to navigate the hermeneutics of martyrdom seems to me to be the only way within Christianity, although far from foolproof, to address this problem.

In fact, to dispute Iyer's claim that suicide bombers reproduce most of the aspects of Christ on the cross, the Christian appeal to the cross is precisely the reason why a phenomenon like suicide bombing *cannot* be seen as "martyrdom" from a Christian point of view, even apart from the issue of pacifism. True Christian martyrs of solidarity, like the UCA Jesuits, do not — as Christ did not — *seek* death. They support the poor and live out the prophetic will of God faithfully in a world of sin. It is that world of sin that brings them to their death. Martyrdom happens to them because of their Christian motives and morals, to be sure, but their deaths are more directly the result of their vocal political stances. The goal of the martyrs treated in this paper was to save lives on all sides, even to reclaim the humanity of the oppressors by prophetically calling them to cease their repression—which is itself a form of liberation. To speak of this kind of martyrdom in the same breath as the "martyrdom" of suicide bombers is simplistic and shows the danger of free-floating conceptions of martyrdom that are not governed by a critical norm, such as that which the cross of Christ provides for Christians. But, in general, Christians would have no reason to apply their criteria of martyrdom to the fallen political heroes of other religions, even if it would be an underlying Christian ethic that would guide Christians' evaluation of those heroes.

However, the Christian church would do well to ask in humility why we are able to point to so few Christian martyrs in the situations that have produced those praiseworthy heroes from other religions.

Finally, Rubén Rosario-Rodríguez brings several worthy concerns to our discussion. On his first point, that the distinction between solidarity and confession too easily bifurcates theology and ethics, I agree with his general concern. The martyrs discussed in my paper certainly entered into their acts of solidarity *because* of their confession of Christ. That is a point I tried to make in the paper, perhaps not clearly enough, by showing the essential unity of the two "kinds" of martyrdom. One of the implications I draw at the end of the paper is that the necessity for theologians to engage the real problems of society requires a close connection between theology and ethics. But as Rosario-Rodríguez points out, the converse is also true, Christian ethics is

not to be separated from the theology that informs it. So, certainly, ethical motifs such as "liberation" are *also* theological motifs whose origins are the scriptures and church tradition. I thank him for clarifying this aspect of our discussion.

In response to Rosario-Rodríguez's second point, I think it is important that we try to remain fair to Sobrino and not overemphasize the sense in which he thinks the crucified peoples bear salvation. Sobrino repeatedly emphasizes the essential negativity of their deaths. Indeed, the point of liberation theology is to call for the *removal* of the crucified people from their historical cross. It is important that Sobrino realizes that these are *passive* martyrs, and that calling them martyrs at all in this sense implies a distinction from *active* martyrs. That being said, I share Rosario-Rodríguez's concern that flippant talk regarding the crucified people can too easily give the impression that there is something *good* about their deaths.

This takes us into the third point, regarding the crucified people and theodicy. Rosario-Rodríguez is worried that Sobrino's attempt to give meaning to the deaths of the crucified people ends up justifying their deaths by appeal to divine providence. I myself think that Sobrino's account of the cross of Jesus provides a significant counter-argument to that interpretation. Sobrino does not think that Jesus' death was something planned by God from the beginning. Rather, he talks about it as what is (perhaps) the inevitable end of an authentic incarnation. That is to say, if God really becomes present in our history and lives a life of true love amidst history's sin and hatred, then death is an understandable, perhaps even inevitable, result. The sin of the world will attempt to destroy that love because the latter calls sin into question. The "goodness" of the cross is precisely the love of Jesus' life, as well as the way in which God, almost *ex nihilo*, can (through the resurrection) transform the *essential* negativity of Jesus' murder into salvation. Although I do not agree entirely with the direction of Sobrino's atonement theology, his construal of it does shield him from the objection at hand. For in parallel terms it follows that anything "good" or "salvific" that Sobrino could possibly attribute to the deaths of the crucified people must necessarily be something that God does *despite* the essential negativity of those deaths. Although Sobrino does make statements on occasion that tend toward the dangers that worry Rosario-Rodríguez, and although I agree with him that moral agency is a necessary component of martyrdom in the most proper sense, I think Sobrino's main point is to honor the crucified people by naming them

theologically and by making it impossible for theology to proceed as usual without taking their horrifying reality into account.

Tory Muslim: The Conversion of Marmaduke Pickthall

LAWRENCE M. STRATTON

In a series of lectures at Harvard University in April 1961, medieval historian R.W. Southern said that for much of Western history, especially during “medieval Christendom,” the “existence of Islam,” was a “problem at every level of experience” (Southern 1962:3). He elaborated upon the practical and theological challenges of Islam:

As a practical problem it called for action and for discrimination between the competing possibilities of Crusade, conversion, coexistence, and commercial interchange. As a theological problem it called persistently for some answer to the mystery of its existence: what was its providential role in history—was it a symptom of the world’s last days or a stage in the Christian development; a heresy, a schism, or a new religion; a work of man or devil; an obscene parody of Christianity, or a system of thought that deserved to be treated with respect? (1962:3)

As the twentieth century drew to a close, just prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington echoed Southern’s assessment, noting that “The relations between Islam and Christianity, both Orthodox and Western, have often been stormy” (Huntington 1996:209). “Each has been the other’s Other,” Huntington wrote (1996:209).

To many Western minds subconsciously imbued with what Cambridge historian H. Butterfield labeled the “Whig Interpretation of History” (Butterfield 1950)—in which history moves in sync with a Christian, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon drumbeat, progressing along a path toward greater freedom of conscience, political liberty, and capitalist economic organization — Islam has seemed to traverse through time going in the opposite direction. Both of Bernard Lewis’s recent books, *What Went Wrong?* (Lewis 2002)

and *The Crisis of Islam* (Lewis 2003) encourage this viewpoint, at least implicitly.

Western minds often view Islam not only as anti-progressive, but as inherently violent. As Yasin Dutton has written, “the claim has often been made—even if only to counter it—that Islam spread by the sword” (Dutton 1999:157-158). Frederick Denison Maurice, for example, wrote in his 1892 book, *The Religions of the World*, that “It has been proved that Mahometanism [*sic*] can only thrive while it is aiming at conquest” (Maurice 1892:28). Dutton argues that the “simplest answer” to this oversimplification is that “Islam spread not so much *by* the sword as *with*, that is, alongside the sword” (Dutton 1999: 158). Similarly, Nehemia Levtzion has observed that although “military conquest did not in itself bring about conversion to Islam,” it paved the way for the “colonization of the conquered lands by nomads and the evolution of a Muslim government and Islamic institutions” (Levtzion 1979:7).

Regardless of how one describes the usual macro-pattern of the conversion of entire cultures to Islam, conversion can also be an individualist micro-phenomenon. Novelist Marmaduke Pickthall’s conversion from Anglican Christianity to Islam in London in 1917 defies any facile generalizations. His friend and biographer Anne Fremantle wrote in her 1938 book, *Loyal Enemy*, that Pickthall “did not become a Muslim until the behavior of Christian Europe forced him to it” (Fremantle 1938:102). If there was a sword involved in Pickthall’s Islamic conversion, it was not wielded by any stereotypical marauding “Muhammadan,” but by what he considered to be the mistaken behavior of his beloved British Empire.

A pivotal turning point in Pickthall’s life took place on November 29, 1917, when he was thirty-two, at a gathering of the Muslim Literary Society at London’s Muslim House. Pickthall—the classmate of Winston Churchill at Harrow, the son and grandson of English clergymen, the step-brother of two Anglican nuns in South Africa, and the author of fourteen popular novels and hundreds of articles and essays—stepped to the podium and delivered an *apologia* for his conversion in the form of a lecture entitled, “Islam and Modernism” (Pickthall 1918a:5-11). This address concisely states many themes that he had expressed in the past and would repeat in the future, encompassing his critique and rejection of Christianity, his embrace of Islam, and his call for Muslims to live according to the Islamic ideal. It reflects his own interior intellectualized approach to his new faith, and hints at the external socio-political factors that led him to spurn the faith of his fathers.

After some initial pleasantries Pickthall begins his lecture by defining modernism as “the attempt within the various religious bodies of recent years to criticize their doctrines in the light of modern scientific thought, and yet present the semblance of belief” (1918a:5). He asserts that “many Christians” have “discarded literal belief in the Bible, and even will admit in private talk a doubt of Jesus Christ’s existence. And yet, he notes, they obey the Church’s rules, accept its dogmas, and profess belief in Christianity in some peculiar, esoteric sense.” “[M]odernistic Jew[s]” have also discarded ancient beliefs “while still venerating the *atmosphere* of Judaism(1918a:5 *Italics mine*).”

Pickthall suggests that some of these modernist Christians might well ask an agnostic: “Why do you leave us? It is possible to doubt and yet believe” (1918a:5). He notes that this “strange theory” of doubting doctrine while clinging religious ambiance is widespread and “comfortable” because it enables its adherents “to tolerate all kinds of new developments.” For Pickthall, “The hope of Christian Europe” is not this sort of half-hearted doubter, but “the honest doubter, the real seeker after truth, and not the man or woman who thus drugs his conscience.” The “theoretical” good which results from this hope in honest doubt is free thought. But he says, “the evil comes from the lack of a religious, guiding and controlling principle.” He critiques the way such a lack of clear principles has influenced the way the Church in the West has used and viewed power in the past and in the present:

The Christian Churches have lost all control; you can see that. And when they had control, they were renowned for their intolerance and selfish greed. Europe claims to control the destinies of all the world, yet is itself without control (1918a:5).

Pickthall then declares that Europe is in this sorry state “For lack of a thinking head, for lack of a religion which a modern man of reason can believe, for lack of a belief in the Sovereign of the Universe to whose judgment we have all to bow” (1918a:5).

The religion that people need, Pickthall says, unsurprisingly, is Islam, which is, and has been the “one true religion, just as there is, and always has been only one true God.” Other religions “are fantasies of men who went astray.” He then repeats the Muslim perspective that Islam recapitulates and repristinizes the true essence of Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism:

It is the religion of Abraham and Moses and Jesus—aye, and Buddha, I believe, and all those ancient teachers whose followers now worship idols. It is the religion of Muhhammad—El Islam. Allah is the God not of a particular nation, as the Jews believed, nor of mankind only, as many other religious people seem to believe; He is the God of all creation, of all life (1918a:5, 6).

Pickthall then recited from memory passages from the Qur-án that supported his point.

The report about his speech in the *Islamic Review* said that the large audience, “consisting chiefly of Indian Muslim Students,” listened to Pickthall in “rapt silence” (*Islamic Review* 1918:3,4). The review noted that Pickthall’s “intonation of suitable verses from Holy Qur-án in the original text to illustrate the beauties of Islam, with which he frequently punctuated his most learned discourse, threw those who were not used to listening to such recitations from a Western’s lips into ecstasies” (1918a:4).

Princeton University’s Oriental History professor Philip K. Hitti wrote in his 1943 book, *The Arabs: A Short History*, that Christianity never “caught hold of the Arab imagination” — perhaps because many Arabs viewed the languages of the Christian sacred texts to be ineloquent (Hitti 1996:25-27). “The beauty of man,” Hitti quotes an Arabic adage, “lies in the eloquence of his tongue” (1996:26). Hitti suggests that “[t]he triumph of Islam was to a certain extent the triumph of a language, more particularly a book,” whose aesthetic and “miraculous character” provided Muslims the “strongest argument in favor of the genuineness of their faith” (1996:27). The linguistic beauty of the Qur-án—which Pickthall would later translate—was certainly an attraction for him, a linguistic prodigy who was fluent in English, French, Arabic, Latin, and Turkish, and who had studied Italian, German, and Spanish.

His quotations from the Qur-án in this address often seem to be celebrating the aesthetic, poetic beauty of these scriptures as much as the truth of the propositions that his references are intended to support. For example, after quoting the verse: “There is not an animal upon the earth, nor a creature flying with wings, but is a people like unto you. We have neglected nothing in the Book (of our decrees). Eventually to their Lord they will be gathered,” Pickthall remarks: “Compare that text with the words of the Gospel concerning the price of sparrows, and tell me which is nearer to the truth revealed by modern science” (Pickthall 1918a:6). He continues: “upon every page of the Qur-án the Muslim is adjured to study the phenomena and laws of nature, as the signs of God and proofs of His existence.”

Pickthall then reiterates his theme that Islam has no dichotomy between nature and faith: "Now there are many people here in England who will tell you: 'We believe in the God of nature, not the Church's God.' In El-Islam there is no such distinction to distract men's minds" (Pickthall 1918a:6). He recounts the resilient beauty of nature: "How benevolent, how sweet, appears the natural order, with all its incidents, including death, compared with the unholy din and bloodshed raging out in Flanders—God's providence compared to that of men." Yet, even as World War I continues, "grass will grow again upon the battlefields, and wild flowers bloom upon the craters formed by bursting shells." Man's brutality cannot change God's laws. He avers that people who say they believe in the God of nature actually make nature God, without seeing evidence "of the mighty Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator, Guide, and Judge of all." "They would deny that God bears any intimate relation to each human soul," he says (Pickthall 1918a:7).

Pickthall says that Islam makes clear the connection between nature, experience, and faith: " [I]t seems to me that although men are astray, and have been taught to set up sacraments or fetishes or idols between them and God, yet when they do lift up their hearts above these things in sincere worship, and do good works, the Lord of Heaven and Earth befriends them." Islam "enables us" to "detect" "false religious enthusiasm" and provides rules "to keep man's reason clear and healthy[.]" Things that obscure reason should be avoided, such as "music, incense, pictures, statues" which "are not to be regarded as a true approach to God." He celebrates Muhammad's enduring message:

Our Prophet (may God bless him!) did not found a new religion; he recalled men to the truth. And the truth in El-Islam remains unchanged until this day, exactly as he established it. The service in that glorious cathedral the Suleymanieh at Stamboul"—[referring to Istanbul's immense Mosque of Sultan Suleyman]—"is exactly as it was in the little enclosure at Yathrib where the Prophet preached, leaning against a palm tree (Pickthall 1918a:8).¹

¹ See, *Istanbul* (2001), 77. "The interior is truly overwhelming in the grandeur of its proportions, the austerity of its aspect, the absence of any excessive ornamentation. Almost square, it is dominated by an enormous dome on a drum, 53 meters high. One hundred and thirty-eight windows flood the hall with variegated light" illuminating "white-ground ceramic tiles with flowers and leaves in turquoise, blue, and red."

Pickthall then expresses the climactic central thesis of his address:

The aim of modernism in religion, if it is to be of any use, should be to reduce religion to the simple truth—I mean a creed which still can stand the test of man's experience; and any man who does that earnestly, and in a spirit of devotion, will certainly become a Muslim though he may not know it.

But Pickthall does not end with this grand crescendo of praise for Islam. He now turns his attention to its reform. The London *Times Literary Supplement's* review of Anne Fremantle's biography of Pickthall—which went through three printings, suggests that she overstated her regard for her friend, and almost adopted father, by comparing Pickthall to the Protestant Reformers.² She wrote, for example, that “When the history of the Reformation of the Mohammedan world comes to be written, Marmaduke Pickthall will be its Morning Star, for that reformation is as without barriers of race as the one whose leaders were John Knox from Scotland, Calvin of Geneva, Huss of Bohemia, and the German Luther” (Fremantle 1938:370). Fremantle may have been, in fact, mirroring Pickthall's own self-image as a reformer of Islam.³ So, at this point in his address, he artfully shifts his discussion, stating, “The next thing which I have to say is not so pleasant” (Pickthall 1918a:8).

He remonstrates his Muslim audience: “We need a fair example of Islam in practice in a modern setting.” He recognizes the current “anxious time,” but states confidently, “no earthly power can rob us of the chance of setting an example of Islamic conduct, personally and collectively, in daily life.” Much of the rest of his talk suggests that Muslims have not been behaving properly. He says:

² “Biographical: Marmaduke Pickthall.” Review of *Loyal Enemy* by Anne Fremantle, *Times Literary Supplement* 7 January 1939, 6.

³ Pickthall actually asserts in a 1919 article in the *Islamic Review* challenging an English movement “in favour of the re-conversion of St. Sophia at Constantinople from a mosque to a church” that both the European Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation were traceable to Islam's influence. (Pickthall 1919b:123). He states: “But the influence of Islam traceable in the Renaissance as well as in the Reformation did help to liberate the thought of Europe from its stupefying bondage to ecclesiasticism” (1919b:126).

And shall I tell you what, in my opinion, is a leading cause among the causes of the kind of lethargy which fell upon Islamic peoples for so many years? Islam makes people happy. The triumph of Islam in any country means the happiness of the majority. And in happiness the Muslims gave up striving to a great extent. And so the discontented and unhappy peoples overreached them. They forgot the words of the Qur-án: "Verily with difficulty there is ease. And when thou art relieved, still strive and seek to please your Lord (Pickthall 1918a:9)"

He urges his listeners to make the "Muslim brotherhood" the "kingdom of God on earth." He urged them to live according to Islamic law:

The law which is contained in the Qur-án and the teaching of the Prophet is *the* moral law—you cannot get behind it or beyond—the only law to be obeyed by men of every clime who in seeking human happiness and human progress would draw near to God; in which the duty towards God and the duty towards the neighbor, the two aspects of religion, are completely harmonized. This has been admitted, not by Muslims only, but by Christians and Jews also, who have studied it (Pickthall 1918a:9).

At this point he condemns Muslims who have too much concern with the letter of the law and not the spirit. Their intellectual laziness leads them to accept "verdicts of some Sheykh-úl-Islam or Muhtahid" (Pickthall 1918a:10). They substitute thinking in favor of charms and talisman "rather than an inspiration and a light to the intelligence." "But, thank God, I have also seen the change beginning, and that is why I am so full of hope in these dark days" (Pickthall 1918a:10).

He attributes the problems Muslims face to this "decay of education," "That spirit of contented brooding on the letter of the law is to some extent the cause of all our present troubles, which are truly of a nature to disturb the minds of Muslims." No wonder "superficial thinkers," upon seeing "so-called Christendom[']s" material success, end up being "influenced by its standards" so that they come to believe that the "Islamic dispensation is old-fashioned and unequal to the burden of these days" (1918a:10).

"But look a little deeper," he urges, and "you will see that the law of El-Islam is acknowledged as the only moral law which makes for progress, by the admissions of its very enemies." He suggests that "boiling underneath the surface here in Europe" are the results from the failure to abide by Islamic law: labor unrest and widespread divorce. Moreover, he declares that

these ills are spreading "because the present order of society is based on usury" (1918a:10).⁴ He applauds alcohol prohibition campaigns, which, in the United States, culminated in the U.S. Constitution's Eighteenth Amendment, ratified in 1919.⁵ He says sarcastically, "They are the very latest thing in Christian progress!" (Pickthall 1918a:10). He notes the "small and timorous" beginnings of international law in order "to fix some limits for the cruelty of Christian warfare." "Are these in fact a tribute to the sacred law?" he asks, "And what could have saved this so-called Christian civilization from disaster?" He proclaims, "Islam is able to assume the burden of these days, and no other religion is able."

Pickthall concludes his lecture with a call for Muslims to live according to Islamic law so that their example will convert others. He praises the strict discipline that builds the Muslim brotherhood: "The ablutions, the hours of prayer, the fast of Ramadan, the pilgrimage—have any of them any value in themselves, or towards God?" (Pickthall 1918a:11). "By them our minds and souls are brought into a fit condition to receive spiritual blessings," he writes. Such discipline is what would most appeal to "the best type of European." He then recounts the story he had heard about German and Russian soldiers, "soldiers on both sides," who were "converted to Islam by the example of their Muslim comrades." He concludes:

Could anybody be converted by the kind of Muslim who neglects his duty, and makes out his religion to be something very like the religion of any one else? Islam, though Muslims were to lose temporal power, could still conquer the world by high example. Let that be our Jihad. And it is true Jihad; for did not the Prophet say: 'The greatest

⁴ Max Weber discusses the relationship between a religious group's acceptance of usury and the "attitude of religious ethics toward the imperatives of rational profitmaking" in his massive "Sociology of Religion" almost as a religious rationality index. See, Weber 1978:584, 585-589. Ernst Troeltsch, Weber's University of Heidelberg colleague and friend, similarly includes a discussion of various Christian religious groups' attitudes toward usury, culminating in its acceptance in Calvinist Ascetic Protestantism. See, Ernst Troeltsch 1992: I: 250, 320, II: 556, 643. Protestant Reformer John Calvin was the first Christian theologian to allow the charging of interest for loans, thereby casting aside the anti-usury prohibitions of Luther, Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, and parts of the Old and New Testaments. Cf. Nelson 1949, Schulze 1985.

⁵The U.S. Constitution's Eighteenth amendment was repealed by the Twenty-First Amendment in 1933.

Jehad is that for the conquest of self'? It is not an impossible task. It is not a task beyond the strength of common men; for the demands of the religious law are purely reasonable (1918a:11).

At the speech's end, the spellbound audience listened to Pickthall recite the Qur-án, in Arabic, of course. "With his hands folded on his breast, and an expression of serene contentment on his face, he recited that famous prayer which concludes the second chapter of the Holy Qur-án. When he sat down, every one of his hearers felt that they had lived through, during that one short hour, the most remarkable period of his or her life" (*Islamic Review* 1918: 4). He soon "took on the name Muhammad and immediately became one of the pillars of the British Islamic community" (Clark 1986:39).

Presumably the readers of the *Islamic Review* knew "that famous prayer which concludes the second chapter of the Holy Qur-án." The context of the address as a public statement of Pickthall's conversion to Islam might suggest that he might have then performed what scholar of Islam J. Dudley Woodberry describes as the "indispensable action of conversion," a confession of faith in the words: "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Apostle of God." This summary of Islamic faith is known as the "*shahada* (witness)" (Woodberry 1992:22, 23). As Woodberry notes, the *shahada* did not develop into its "liturgical form" until later in an early biography of Muhammad written in the eighth century, C.E. (1992:25). Yet, there are elements of the *shahada* throughout the Qur-án, "e.g., 2:255/256; 27:26, 28:88; 7:158/157." If Pickthall did not pray the *shahada*, which biographer Peter Clark implies (Clark 1996:39), the English convert's closing prayer may have been the words which do literally end "Surah 2": "Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget, or *miss the mark*! Our Lord! Lay not on us such a burden as You did lay on those before us! Our Lord! Impose not on us that which we have not the strength to bear! Pardon us; absolve us and have mercy upon us. You are our Protector; grant us victory over the disbelieving folk" (Pickthall 1999:43). This Surah's implicit theme of praying to *hit the mark* as Muslims did in the past is consistent with the Pickthall's admonishment that Muslims should, by their own example, "once more take the lead in human progress (Pickthall 1918a:8)."

Pickthall's conversion to Islam in November 1917 ended an emotional and spiritual crisis that he had been experiencing for several years (Clark 1986:42). He attended his last Anglican service in 1914. During a service in his Sussex parish, he became angry when the congregation began singing

Charles Wesley's hymn "For the Mahometans." The text of this hymn is as follows:

The smoke of the infernal cave,
Which half the Christian world o'erspread,
Disperse, Thou heavenly Light, and save
The souls by that Impostor led,
That Arab-chief, as Satan bold,
Who quite destroy'd Thy Asian fold.
O might the blood of sprinkling cry
For those who spurn the sprinkled blood!

Assert Thy glorious Deity,
Stretch out Thine arm, Thou Triune God!
The Unitarian fiend expel,
And chase his doctrine back to hell (Manning 1942:17).

Bernard L. Manning, "Fellow and Bursar of Jesus College, Cambridge," wrote in his book, *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts*, that Wesley "has given a vivid and a true picture of the devastation wrought in the Christian East by Islam" (1942:17). Pickthall obviously did not agree with Manning. When the music began, Pickthall "slipped quietly from the Church and from Christianity" (Fremantle 1938:227).

Freemantle writes that when Pickthall heard the preacher in the Sussex church refer to Bulgaria's advance against Turkey in the early stages of World War I as the advance of "Christian souls" over the "Turks as Satan," an opposite perspective was evoked in his mind: "Remembering turbans set low to cover scars where ears had been, the full horror of the Carnegie Commission's report on Muslim areas devastated and their populations destroyed entirely by Christian men, Marmaduke felt unable to rise when Wesley's hymn was sung" (1938:227). This divergence between Pickthall's own thinking and prevailing English attitudes toward both Islam and the Ottoman Turkish Empire had evolved ever since his first visit to the Middle East following his time at Harrow over two decades earlier.

Pickthall's father died when he was six years old in 1881. At this time, his mother and brother moved from the idyllic country parish of Suffolk to Kensington in London. During his youth he was precocious in arithmetic and languages at his day school in Kensington, but he also went through

periods of distress, including bouts with bronchitis and a “nervous breakdown” (Clark 1986:8-9). After a “brain fever” at age eight, he lost his mathematical skills (1986:8-9). He later returned to Suffolk, where his father’s successor, the Rev. Beaufoy James Saint Patrick “gave him lessons in the classics and inspired an interest in astronomy and wild flowers” (1986:9). In January 1889 he entered Harrow as a day student, where he spent six terms. He was very shy. His 1919 book, *Sir Limidus*, chronicles his difficult life at the school. In 1890, his mother took him to Neuchatel, Switzerland, where he studied French; and Florence, Italy, where he studied Italian. In 1892, Pickthall became a boarder at St. Catherine’s school in Broxbourne, where he set his sights on the Consular Service in Turkey. When he applied to the Foreign Service position, his test scores in Latin and four modern languages were the highest in his applicant group, but because of his poor performance on the arithmetic section of the qualifications exam, he came in seventh.

He later wrote, “I was in despair. All my hopes for months had been turned towards sunny countries and old civilizations, and from the drab monotone of London fog, which seemed a nightmare. . . . I dreamed of Eastern sunshine, palm trees, camels, desert sand, as of a Paradise, which I had lost by my shortcomings” (Muriel Pickthall 1937:138). His mother, sensing her son’s depressed state, came up with a solution. She suggested to him that he either could return to Harrow with the goal of heading to Oxford like his brother, or he could accompany a relative of her first husband, the Rev. Thomas Dawson, to Jerusalem, where Dawson was to become a chaplain to Bishop G. F. P. Blythe, the fourth Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem. He took the travel option. His family justified the expense on the grounds that through it he “might eventually find some backstairs way into the service of the Foreign Office.” He wrote in his introduction to his 1918 book, *Oriental Encounters*, that upon his arrival in Egypt, his first destination, England and the Foreign Service lost its lustre: “For then the European ceased to interest me, appearing somehow inappropriate and false in those surroundings (Pickthall 1918b:2).”

Pickthall’s subsequent adventures in the Middle East are fascinating. They make up the stimulating content of his many books. Accompanied by a friend he met on the ship named *Sulayman*, he ended up traveling throughout the region “following the customs of the people of the land in all respects.” An English chaplain, James E. Hanauer, (whose 1907 book, *Folk-Lore of the Holy Land: Moslem, Christian, and Jewish*, Pickthall edited) taught Pickthall Arabic. Pickthall also befriended another native, an Ottoman soldier named Rashid, “who persuaded Pickthall to buy him out of the army and allow him

to be his servant (Clark 1986:11).” They traveled around Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria for eighteen months.

During his travels Pickthall frequented coffee shops and Turkish baths, and got to know native people, often living with them in their houses. He thus “acquired the vernacular without an effort, in the manner of amusement” (Muriel Pickthall 1937:138). Something unexpected struck him during these adventures — a surprise to which he alluded in his November 1917 London speech on “Islam and Modernism.” He later wrote: “I was amazed at the immense relief I found in such a life. In all my previous years I had not seen any happy people. These were happy people” (Muriel Pickthall 1937:139).

Peter Clark writes that for Pickthall, “It was the European with straw-coloured hair, red face, pith helmet and loud laugh who was out of place” (Clark 1986: 12). This contrast was evident when Pickthall visited Bishop Blythe in Jerusalem. Fremantle writes that “To Bishop Blythe, who had been expecting a Harrow schoolboy, Marmaduke, dressed in Arab clothes and cheerfully chatting in Arabic to the Palace servants, came as rather a shock” (Fremantle 1938: 58). Visiting Christians in Jerusalem, Pickthall “was shocked by the narrowness of Christianity” (1938: 59). As he witnessed the conflicts in the Holy City between “Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Orthodox, and Uniate,” Pickthall recalled the statement of Roman Emperor Julian—decried in history as “Julian the Apostate” (Cochrane 1957:261-291), “See how these Christians love one another” (Fremantle 1938:59).

As Pickthall grew in his love for Arab people, increased his knowledge of Arabic, and witnessed the snobbery and sect rivalries of Christians in the region, he developed a greater respect for Islam. Muhammad’s statement that “Difference of opinion in my community is a manifestation of divine mercy” and “Let there be no compulsion in religion” contrasted with what he discovered among Christ’s purported followers in Jerusalem” (1938:59). Fremantle states:

It was Christianity, that had driven so many of his contemporaries into the arid wilderness of Darwinian skepticism or Spencerian atheism, which finally led him to Islam. Partly his youth revolted against

⁶ Fremantle, of course, is referring to Charles Darwin’s controversial books *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) and Social Darwinist philosopher Herbert Spencer’s *Social Statics* (1851) and *Principles of Ethics* (1877). (See Cross 1997:451, 1528).

the prune-like consistency of mind of the good Bishop's satellites, but mostly his overwhelming sense of reality refused, in this holiest of all cities, either to limit the means of Grace or to arrogate to any one community the ownership of the places where that Grace had manifested itself most clearly (1938:60).⁶

In Damascus, the ancient Syrian city on the road to which the Apostle Paul, according to Acts 9, encountered Jesus Christ and converted from being a zealous Jewish persecutor of the early Church to being an eloquent spokesman for Christianity, Pickthall seriously considered converting to Islam. Increasing his mastery of Arabic, he grew to love the Qur-án, "the greatest poem, the most superb achievement of all Arabic literature (Fremantle 1938:77)." While studying Arabic from Sheykh-ul-Ulema of Damascus' great mosque, Pickthall mentioned his desire to become a Muslim. The teacher, "a noble and benign man," reminded him that he should consult with his mother. As Pickthall later wrote:

"No, my son," were his words, "wait until you are older, and have seen again your native land. You are alone among us as our boys are alone among the Christians. God knows how I should feel if any Christian teacher dealt with a son of mine otherwise than as I now deal with you." Then, pointing to a candle burning near, he said: "Observe this fire. There is a shapely flame, the light that shines around us, and when I put my hand out, there is the heat as well. I blow, and all is gone. How many things? You answer three in one, I answer one. We both are right." (Fremantle 1938:81, 82).

The teacher's reference to the candle both implied the possibility of losing a religious flame that was hastily embraced and, perhaps, sought as well to allude to the Islamic rejection of the Christian Trinity. Pickthall recalled that if he had converted to Islam at that time he "would pretty certainly have repented it" because he "had not thought and learnt enough about religion to be certain of his faith." He recounted, "It was only the romance and pageant of the East which then attracted" him.

Pickthall considered buying property and settling in Beirut, but was blocked by the British consul General who, along with other British expatriates, had "supercilious scorn" towards him (Clark 1986:11). He soon fell ill with typhoid and was summoned home by his mother. Clark summarizes his time away from Britain in the Middle East: "The two years away determined the course of Pickthall's life. He left England a depressed boy, burdened with

a sense of failure. He returned a man, not confident but buoyant and with a distinct identity(1986: 11)."

Back in England, he recalled his adventures in his book *Saïd the Fisherman*, which became a great success, eliciting praise from H. G. Wells, among others. He also married an old sweetheart, Murial Smith, in an Anglican Church. For the next few years they would move around, living in Switzerland, Suffolk, and London, but his heart was in the Middle East. In 1904, he was invited by Lord Cromer, British pro-Consul in Egypt, to go to Egypt to explain "Egyptian psychology" to him. This invitation resulted from Pickthall's widespread reputation for understanding the region. Indeed, as E. M. Forster wrote in 1921, Pickthall "is the only contemporary English novelist who understands the Nearer East" (Clark 1986:1). His 1908 book, *The Children of the Nile*, and his 1913 book, *Veiled Women*, resulted from "this Egyptian experience." In 1908 he returned to Egypt, this time accompanied by Murial. He retraced his earlier steps through the region from Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, and Jerusalem with his bride. In Jerusalem, they visited his friend *Sulayman*, who was nearly blind.

The next step in Pickthall's path toward Islam was his trip to Turkey in 1913. Sociologist Robert Hefner's observation that "in our efforts to understand conversion, we have to pay as much attention to the moral and political consequences of membership in a community as we do to its intellectual doctrines" (Hefner 1993:121), illuminates the next step of Pickthall's pilgrimage away from Christianity. Hefner's study of "Christian Conversion in Muslim Java" begins with the statement, "Politics has always deeply affected Christian proselytization in Muslim Java" (1993:99). Expanding upon this theme that correlates the phenomena of religious conversion to the political environment, Hefner compares the origins of Christianity and Islam, noting, "Christianity originated at the margins of empire, indeed, originally at the margins of Judaism; Islam arose at the heart of an expansionist imperium" (1993:32). Hefner is referring to the fact that "Muhammad was," as Bernard Lewis says, "so to speak his own Constantine" whose religious movement was initially combined with political power (Lewis 2002:98-99).⁷ The political milieu surrounding Pickthall's conversion placed him squarely in the tensions between the political policies of an as-

⁷ Lewis additionally states that "In the religiously conceived polity that [Muhammad] founded and headed in Medina, the Prophet and his successors confronted the realities of the state and, before very long, of a vast and expanding empire" (2002:98-9).

cendant imperialist Christian Empire—Britain, and a tottering Muslim Empire, the Ottoman Turks.

Like many high Church Anglicans, Pickthall was raised as a Tory, Britain's conservative party. English journalist Clifford Longley writes in his 2002 book, *Chosen People: The Big Idea that Shapes England and America*, that in English history, "it was the fate of the Tories (the American phrase Manifest Destiny captures the flavor of it) through two centuries to be the natural party of throne and altar" (Longley 2002:50). Pickthall recalled before his death, "Among the things I was brought up to admire was [Tory Prime Minister] Disraeli's Oriental policy by which England was to become the mentor to the Islamic world, to foster and assist its revival, using Turkey as interpreter and intermediary" (Clark 1986: 20). Says Clark, "A mutual sympathy between the Young Turks and Britain was a natural consequence, especially as the [1878] Treaty of Berlin, signed by Disraeli, was supposed to uphold Turkish territorial integrity" (1986: 20).

As Niall Ferguson details in his 2002 book, *Empire*, opposition Liberal Party leader William E. Gladstone "objected violently to Disraeli's foreign policy in the Near East" (Ferguson 2002:232-233). Gladstone criticized the government's involvement in the financing of the Suez Canal and "also accused Disraeli of turning a blind eye to Turkish atrocities against Christian communities in Bulgaria." Once in power himself, "Gladstone executed one of the great U-turns of Victorian foreign policy," and increasingly sided Britain with its former Crimean War adversary, Russia, in opposition to Turkey, its Crimean War ally. This change in policy adjusted European alignments as World War I approached, with disastrous consequences for the Ottoman Turks. Quoting Pickthall, Clark writes:

Under the influence of Gladstone, Britain repudiated [Disraeli's] policy, to the distress of Turks themselves. When this Anglo-Islamic policy foundered, when "England threw Disraeli's scheme with the old policy aside, it was at once picked up by Germany." Turks "only turned to Germany . . . after England failed them" (Clark 1986:29).

⁸ Besides Ferguson's volume, many other books detail the global plate tectonics of this era. See Howard 1998:3-9, 91-102; Freely 1998:281-98; Tuchman 1984:261 (In Gladstone's pamphlet "Bulgarian Horrors," he said that the Turk "was 'the one great anti-human specimen of humanity,' who had blackened Europe with his 'fell Satanic orgies, his ferocious passions, his daily gross and incurable misgovernment.'")

The power politics that took place between the various European powers and the Ottoman Empire in this era are intriguing and complex.⁸ Fremantle titled her biography of Pickthall *Loyal Enemy* because of his vigorous opposition to English Turkish policy.

Although he worshipped in the Crimean Memorial Church in Istanbul during his Turkish visit in 1913, he was increasingly upset by the hypocrisy of Christians. He found Western Christians in the Middle East to be "snobbish and sectarian" (Clark 1986: 36). He was troubled by the way native Christians would gain leverage over local Muslims by appealing to Western Christian powers.⁹ He was also troubled by the way European powers used "factitious feeling[s] of Christian brotherhood" (Clark 1986: 29) as ploys in their practice of *realpolitik*.¹⁰ After his death, the journal *Islamic Culture* republished excerpts of his "Letters from Turkey," and editorialized that this sojourn became "the turning point of his life" (Pickthall 1937: 419-432). Meeting with Turks of all classes, Pickthall wrote to his wife that there is something "extraordinarily sweet and gentle" about the Turks that differs from the way there are portrayed in England: "I am quite sure that you will fall in love with the whole race" (1937:427). In contrast, the Christians fought one another. He writes that there was:

A glorious row in the Greek Church at Pera on Good Friday; four different factions fighting which was to carry the big Cross, and the Bishop hitting out right and left upon their craniums with his crosier; many people wounded, women in fits. The Turkish mounted police had to come in force to stop further bloodshed" (1937:432).

⁹ Pickthall brilliantly, amusingly, and tragically captures this interplay between native Christians in Islamic lands, Western political powers, and naïve Western Christians, especially missionaries, all in relation to Muslims, in his 1916 novel, *The House of War*. He asserts in his preface that the term "House of War" formerly meant Christians who declined to embrace Islam when they were conquered by Muslims. "But the Christians of the Turkish Empire have now, for several generations, become a House of War in a much wider sense, a development to which the European missionaries, who come and go, have, often inadvertently, contributed," he says (Pickthall 1916:5).

¹⁰In the years preceeding World War I, Pickthall disliked the way the British press focused on atrocities committed by Turks and Muslims in the Balkan states but ignored similar offense committed by Christians in these regions. Russia had manipulated these tensions to end British support for Turkey. (Clark 1986:29)

Pickthall not only wrote scores of articles that drew upon this visit to Turkey, but he also wrote the book *With the Turk in Wartime*, published in 1914.¹¹ Because of Pickthall's reputation as "a rabid Turcophile," he was perceived as a security risk, which "prevented him from being offered a job with the [English Government's] Arab Bureau in Cairo, a job that went instead to T.E. Lawrence"—later known as Lawrence of Arabia (Clark 1986:31). This Turkish period of Pickthall's life in which the "solidarity of Christendom" was united "against a Muslim Power," broke his heart and convinced him "that there were two kinds of Christianity: one, which would limit its benevolence to Christian peoples; the other, which regarded the world with all of its creeds and races as the theatre for Christian charity and Christian justice" (Muriel Pickthall 1937: 138). He believed that by siding against the Turks, England had cast away the "spirit of humanity and tolerance" of its Empire in favor of a fanaticism "which we blame so loudly when it appears in the more ignorant Mohammedans."

Of course, Pickthall would soon give up on the ideal of Christian charity, replacing it with the ideal of Islamic law—the *Shari'a*, the Muslim religious law or code "which was designed to determine morals, law, religious belief and ritual, marriage, sex, trade and society (Black 2001:9)." Pickthall rejected Western Civilization, too. Moreover, he argued after his 1917 conversion, in a sermon given at London's mosque, that "[t]he meek and gentle Prophet of Nazareth has no part in this dead failure of a civilization" (Pickthall 1919a:229). He asked rhetorically what Jesus has to do with "their commercial aims, their capital and interest, their crushing of the thoughtful in the race for wealth?" He declared: "On the authority of the Gospels no less than that of the Qur-án, I say that Jesus Christ himself will stand with us, the Muslims, on the Day of Judgment, against such Christians."

Islamic Review's memorial salute to Pickthall commits only one of its seven paragraphs to Pickthall's life *before* his conversion (K.S.M. 1936:298-300). In other words, Pickthall embraced his new faith wholeheartedly. He was active in London's Islamic movement, edited the *Islamic Review*, and often officiated "as Imam at the London Muslim Prayer House" as well as leading various prayer services, especially during Ramadan. In need of money and a new adventure, in 1920 he headed to India, where he served as editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*; and continued writing for London's *Islamic Review*. When the *Bombay Chronicle* was sold in 1924, the new manage-

¹¹ Clark includes a massive Marmaduke Pickthall bibliography at the end of his book, as well as succinct summaries of Pickthall's novels.

ment wanted him to take a hostile line toward Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi. He refused and resigned. He was then hired by the Nizam, the Muslim ruling family of Hyderabad, where he worked for the government and was appointed Principal of the Chadarghat High School for Boys.

While in Hyderabad, Pickthall also edited *Islamic Culture*, under Nizam patronage. With the Nizam's permission, in 1928 he took a leave of absence and began working on the project that would secure his place in the annals of English literature: he translated the Qur-án into English.¹² The *Times Literary Supplement's* review of the volume suggested that it should be called "something like the 'authorized' English version" and declared: "The whole is a fine literary achievement, a labour of love on behalf of the creed of the author's choice and adoption" (*Times Literary Supplement* 1931:202).

Pickthall retired from the Nizam's service in 1935 and returned with his wife to England. He had plans to write a novel on the Spanish Islamic period and, "above all," take a pilgrimage to Mecca (Clark 1986:68). On May 19, 1936, Pickthall died. The previous evening, according to his widow, he wrote down the words from the Qur-án, "Whosoever surrendereth his purpose to Allah, while doing good, his reward is with his Lord: and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve" (Muriel Pickthall 1937:142). The London *Times* praised Pickthall's style of writing that could "command irony and laughter" (*Times* 1936:18). "The consequence was that his books were to be enjoyed by the fair-minded in camps far different from that of the author." The obituary also noted that in a recent London lecture, he advocated a pro-Islamic policy for England. He "wished that England might again become the mentor and protector of Islam."¹³

¹² Because according to Muslim tradition, the Qur-án cannot be "translated" from Arabic, Pickthall's English translation was given the title "The Meaning of the Glorious Qur-án" and was published in New York by A.A. Knopf in 1930. His edition contained several innovations over earlier English translations. For example, instead of "Islam" and "Muslim," he translated them as "'surrender' or 'submission,' 'those who surrender' or 'submit' (i.e. to Allah)." (Clark 1986:66). He also included many explanatory, critical, and historical notes. In 1953, the edition was issued as a paperback by the New American Library in New York. (Clark 1986:66).

¹³ When Pickthall lived in Bombay, he lived in the house in which novelist Rudyard Kipling was born. (Clark 1986:59). Although Pickthall revered and embraced the Islamic world, this statement in his obituary suggests that he retained a similar air of Victorian-era condescension toward non-Westerners that Kipling expressed in his 1899 poem "The White Man's Burden." (Kipling 1946:321-2).

As the twenty-first century proceeds under the cloud of global tension between the Islamic world and the Western world—led by the United States and Britain, but also involving internal conflicts with Germany, Russia, and France—Marmaduke Pickthall's penetrating insights into the thinking of these same global players remain strikingly valid. Had the Ottoman Turkish Empire not been so recklessly dismantled, many tensions in the Middle East that linger today might not have occurred. For example, he thought that "if we cut off" the Turkish head of the Muslim world, "a hundred mad fanatic heads would rise instead of it, —a monster would be formed which would devour our children" (Muriel Pickthall 1937:140).

His rejection of Christianity in favor of Islam should serve as a powerful check on all forms of the Christian religion that disfigure Christianity into something grotesque, lest, to paraphrase Pickthall, they dishonor the Prophet, Priest, and King from Nazareth. Pickthall's incredible intellect should also check the pretensions of the often-irrelevant scholasticism that exists in even the highest intellectual reaches of Protestantism, as well as in Roman Catholicism. A good place for Christians and anyone else to begin to sort out the complexities of the current Islam/West split in our contemporary world would be to read some of the many novels, articles, and speeches of Marmaduke Pickthall, not to mention his classic interpretation of Islam entitled *The Glorious Meaning of the Qur-án*. He may or may not convert us, but he will definitely sharpen our thoughts.

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The Problem of Cathar Apocalypticism

RAYMOND A. POWELL

Of all the heresies in the Middle Ages, none posed more of a threat to the Catholic Church in either perception or reality than did Catharism. Though there is no consensus among scholars about actual numbers of those committed to Cathar teaching, there is no question that in certain areas of Europe, especially Southern France and Northern Italy, Catharism had wide popular appeal and the support of significant local figures. The phenomenon of Catharism made a great impact on the Catholic Church. The anxiety caused by this heresy led to the “professionalization” and standardization of inquisitorial procedure under the control of the papacy. It was against Cathars that the Dominican mission first took shape. Yet despite endless speculation about the origins of the heresy, widespread interest in the details of Catholic suppression, thorough analysis of the relationship between Catharism and national/regional identification, and some attention given to the social background of adherents, little serious modern study has been done on what the Cathars actually believed.¹

The neglect of Cathar theology reflects in part the interests of modern historians. But it stems also from two other causes. The first is the limited

¹ Malcolm Lambert, the leading modern authority on Catharism, argues that practice and not doctrine were what attracted most adherents (1998:158). He does identify the question of evil and how to escape from it as the heart of Cathar teaching, and suggests that divisions within Catharism arose over determining the origin and place of evil (1998:55). In general, however, Lambert treats Cathar belief only in the context of specific Cathar groups or texts. There are several older works that attempt to piece together Cathar beliefs. The most thorough is Arno Borst’s *Die Katharer*. Two other attempts are C. Schmidt’s *Histoire et Doctrine De La Secte Des Cathares Ou Albigeois* and Ignatius von Dollinger’s *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*. All three works are primarily descriptive and not analytical. More recent analysis is often provided on the details of specific Cathar texts, as in Christine Thouzellier’s introduction to her edition of *Livre Des Deux Principes*.

number of sources available for a study of Cathar doctrine. Despite the survival of a few actual Cathar documents, there is not a great deal of information about what Cathars believed. Much of what has survived is evidence gathered by authorities of the inquisition, which must be treated with great caution. The second reason for scholarly neglect is the fact that, aside from an agreement on dualism, Cathar theology seems more diverse than systematic. There were at least three major sects within Catharism, each with its own unique teaching, and inquisition registers can leave the impression that there were as many understandings of Catharism as there were Cathars. A full treatment of Cathar doctrine lies outside the scope of this article, which seeks to provide an analysis of Cathar apocalypticism. But in the process of examining the apocalypticism of the Cathars, it will be necessary to consider a number of other elements of Cathar belief. As the relationships between Cathar beliefs are examined, I hope a certain logical coherence in Cathar doctrine will emerge, a pattern that may provide a useful tool for future considerations of Cathar theology, and which will at least point to the need for, and value of, such future studies.

I will begin by defining apocalypticism, then give a brief summary of the eschatology held by the Catholic Church in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, the period when Catharism was at its strongest. Next, I will examine the elements of Cathar thought used to create their apocalyptic vision. Then I will attempt to reconstruct a Cathar eschatology, and will compare this Cathar apocalyptic eschatology with the medieval Catholic model. I will follow by examining elements of Cathar writings which seem to undermine the thesis I am proposing in this article. Finally, I will attempt to draw some general conclusions about Cathars and their theological beliefs which may be useful for further studies of Cathar doctrine.

As it is used here, apocalypticism is a form of eschatology characterized by "the vivid expectation of a violent end to human history and the present world - an end preceded by conflict and the persecution of God's faithful ones, centered on the resurrection of the dead and divine judgment, and culminating in the punishment of the wicked and the transformation of the cosmos into a glorious new home for the just" (Daley 1998:3). Modern historians have often identified strong apocalyptic currents in Western Europe around the year 1,000, but in fact apocalyptic eschatology appears to have been widespread throughout the Middle Ages: "Medieval folk lived in a more or less constant state of apocalyptic expectation" (Bernard McGinn 1998:74-5). The "pervasive" apocalypticism which was so characteristic of medieval

Europe was linked with a series of reform movements beginning around the tenth century. A desire for a purified Church and a sense of the immediacy of the need for such a Church was correlated in a number of religious movements with a certain “nonliteral millenarianism.” The hope for an apocalyptic transformation of the Church rose steadily after the Gregorian reform movement lost momentum. In addition, later Western apocalypticism was fueled by a growing fascination with history. By the twelfth century some of the appeal of apocalypticism was related to a concern to interpret events in light of God’s action (Bernard McGinn 1998:74-78,81). Though apocalypticism varied according to the interpreter and the interpreter’s specific concerns, a general sense of apocalyptic expectation was a significant part of religious experience, both inside and outside the Church, in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.

Medieval Catharism seems to have had all the ingredients necessary for an apocalyptic sect. As dualists, whether radical or mitigated, Cathars were naturally drawn to Johannine literature, an important New Testament source for apocalyptic thought. As the Cathar movement became, increasingly, the target of persecution, it would seem natural that they would find appealing the apocalyptic hope of an immanent judgment of their enemies and vindication of their own righteousness. Catharism flourished in an age in which more and more people in the West, both in and outside the bounds of Catholic orthodoxy, were turning their attention to apocalyptic prophecies. And while the exact relationship between Bogamism and the origins of Catharism continues to elude scholarly consensus, there is no question that Catharism was heavily influenced by the Bogamils, who did, in fact, have a well-developed apocalyptic eschatology.² But in spite of these factors, there is no evidence at all of true apocalypticism in surviving Cathar teaching. The problem of Cathar apocalypticism is, precisely, that none exists.

Catharism failed to become an apocalyptic religion because a number of important elements of Cathar doctrine were uncongenial to such a development. It is of course not accurate to speak of “Cathar Doctrine” as if its adherents were committed to a heretical systematic theology. Cathar beliefs

² Arno Borst, in his chapter “*Erlosung und Ende*,” suggests that the Bogamils were the primary influence on Cathar understandings of salvation and eschatology (1953:167V.). The Bogamils were a Manichaean sect originating in the Balkans in the eighth century. Their beliefs spread through Asia Minor and into parts of Europe, and endured in places such as Herzegovina and Hungary until the fifteenth century (Cross and Livingston 1983:184).

varied widely from one Cathar to another. Cathar doctrine here refers to a spectrum of beliefs shared by many Cathars. Within this spectrum there were a number of logical and theological obstacles to the development of apocalypticism among Cathars. Not every Cathar adhered to every teaching which ran contrary to apocalyptic eschatology, but all Cathars adhered to some such teachings. It is these counter-apocalyptic Cathar beliefs that this paper seeks to examine.

The opposition to apocalypticism was drawn from a wide range of theological issues, including ontology, cosmography, soteriology, eschatology, and exegesis. In attempting to analyze the lack of apocalyptic beliefs among the Cathars, I will first examine each of these areas with a view to understanding Cathar objections to orthodox apocalypticism, and then attempt to construct a general Cathar eschatology. Finally, I will consider the evidences for apocalypticism found within Cathar literature and consider their impact upon the thesis of this paper.

The fundamental theological division among Cathars was over the nature of their dualism. Were there two equal principles, one evil and the other good, or was there, as in Catholic orthodoxy, a good Creator whose creation was later corrupted by an inferior and created being? While there is evidence for several distinct Cathar sects, and for considerable latitude within Catharism in general, the most important division was between the mitigated and unmitigated dualists. Unmitigated dualists believed in two equal and opposite first principles, a basic ontology which militated against a belief in an apocalyptic ending to history. Radical dualist Cathars taught that there were two principles, a good god and an evil god, who were alike in their power, and their eternal nature. "[T]here are two gods or lords without beginning and without end, one good, the other wholly evil" (Anon., *'De heresi'* 1991:164). The two gods had always existed and would always exist. Since radical dualists usually attributed a spiritual creation to the good god and a physical creation, including the creation of this present world, to the evil principle, a certain parallelism in some of these systems demanded that this physical world be as eternal as the good god's spiritual heaven. Thus "an eternity or sempiternity and antiquity ..." are ascribed to some of the creations of the evil principle (Anon., *'Liber de duobus'* 1991:558-559). "The present world ... will never pass away or be depopulated" (Anon., *'An Exposure'* 1991:232). For such Cathars the present world must eternally remain as it is. Contrary to Catholic orthodoxy, these Cathars saw the elements of creation as irredeemable, for the world was never good. There could be no cataclysm-

mic destruction of an old heaven and earth to make way for a new, since the current earth was by definition eternal, and the heaven which was of interest to the Cathars had no relationship whatsoever to the present world.

Other Cathars, however, did not insist on an eternal world. The present “transitory world” was the work of the evil principle who created the four elements, and all that was visible and mutable (Moneta 1991:308-309). Any unchangeable and eternal creation was spiritual, and the work of the good god. Here this present world was indeed passing away. But its mutability was a sign of its status outside the realm of the good god; there was no place for it in redemption. Even the Cathars who believed in a coming destruction of this present world mentioned it only as a foil for the eternity of the the good god’s heaven.³

The origin of each particular element of creation was critical in Cathar thinking. Cathars were fairly united in the belief that the traditional elements of apocalyptic destruction were not available for use by the good god. According to a Cathar text which originated among the Bogamils, Satan “made fire ... also thunder, rain, hail, and snow ...” (Anon., ‘The Secret Supper’ 1991:460). Fire was the handiwork of the evil god; it could have no purifying role in punishing evil or dissolving creation for the good god’s purposes. And, as will be discussed in detail below, all Cathars, regardless of the form of dualism they held, saw destruction, punishment, and killing as aspects of the evil principle. The redeemed had nothing to look forward to in any *dies irae*, and any cosmic intervention by the principle of good would have to find other materials with which to work.

Unmitigated dualists were thus limited in their possibilities to develop an apocalyptic eschatology by their most basic assumptions about reality. But such an eschatology had other difficulties as well, difficulties which were as relevant to mitigated dualists as to their extreme co-religionists. Cathar cosmography also led Cathars to discount the possibility of the intervention of God in history. The belief that physical matter in the current world was the creation of an evil being was not limited to absolute dualists; some Cathars who believed in only one good God assigned the creation of matter

³ “Since there are many persons [who believe the present heavens will perish] we ... will affirm ... the better and wholly imperishable heavens For the present heavens shall pass away after great violence and, being on fire, shall be dissolved and vanish like smoke, and it is not to be believed that [the true heaven] shall grow old, or growing old, shall be changed” (Durand 1991:508-509).

to an evil spirit. One particular sect of mitigated dualist Cathars assigned the creation of the four elements to God, but asserted that all visible things, including this world, were the work of Satan (Rainerius Sacconi 1991:343).

The widespread assumption that physical matter is the product of evil led to a belief in a multi-structured universe. Such a universe lacked agreed-upon boundaries. What was consistent was that the world humans know was not the limit of reality. The "standard" universe consisted of two worlds, each with a heaven and earth, one belonging to the good principle, the other to the evil principle. One inquisitor's manual reports "the heretics professed to believe that there is another new and visible land" (Peter 1991:238). These two worlds mirror one another. In some cases the details of sin and redemption even play out in both places. The Cathar John of Lugio taught that "the good God has another world wherein are people and animals and everything else comparable to the visible and corruptible creatures here; marriages and fornications and adulteries take place there, from which children are born. And what is even more base there the people of the good God, against his command, have taken foreign women to wife, that is, daughters of a strange god or of evil gods, and from such shameful and forbidden intercourse have been born giants and many other beings at various times" (Rainerius Sacconi 1991:340). "In that land of the living," and inquisitor writes, "there are cities and outside them castles, villages, and woodlands, meadows, pastures, sweet water and salt, beasts of the forest and domestic animals, dogs and birds for the hunt, gold and silver, utensils of various kinds, and furniture ... They shall eat and drink, play and sleep, and do all things just as they do in the world of the present" (Anon., 'An Exposure' 1991:233). It was in this other world that Christ was born and crucified, in which the prophets prophesied, and in which many of the events narrated in the Old Testament took place (Peter 1991:238; Moneta 1991:312; Rainerius Sacconi 1991:338,342-343). In other cases, this world is the dark image of the better world. "[S]ince there are many ... who pay little heed to the other world and to other created things beyond those visible in this wicked world, which are vain and corruptible, which as surely as they come from nothing shall return to nothing, we say that in truth there exists another world and other, incorruptible and eternal created things" (Durand 1991:497-498). In either case, the work of the good god takes place in the other realm. The story of salvation involves not redemption in and of this world, but merely escape to the other place, where the good god reigns. Another version of the same idea involves a division of the universe into good spirit and evil matter. In a text

borrowed from the Bogamils the “land of tribulations” (the present world) is contrasted with heaven, where could be seen “great brilliance, many angels, beautiful groves and singing birds,” where “joy without sadness was ... neither hunger nor thirst existed ... nor cold nor heat, but most moderate temperatures ... flesh born of corruption could not stay there” (Anon., ‘Vision of Isaiah’ 1991: 457). Once again, evil matter (the realm of the world) is outside the scope of God’s salvation. However understood, this present world had no place in any Cathar hopes for the future work of God. Uncreated by God (or by the good god) it lay outside the sphere of the work of salvation or the influence of good.

This insistence on the reality of another world was closely tied to Cathar beliefs about the origins of human souls. The majority of Cathars believed that human beings were the souls of fallen angels. The angels had been condemned to leave their bodies in God’s heaven and to be imprisoned in human bodies on the earth. This imprisonment was repeated through cycles of human lives until individual souls merited liberation from the prison of the earth. Those redeemed souls returned to heaven to resume their rightful place and the restoration of their angelic bodies, crowns, and garments. Within Catharism there were variations on the theme; either all of the fallen angels would be saved, or only some. Some believed God created no other souls aside from the fallen angels, some believe God did create other souls which could also hope to be saved. What is consistent is the continued devaluation of the earth in absolute terms. The earth is merely a prison, and salvation an escape from it. Cathars who looked forward to their return to God’s heaven and the resumption of their lost garments and crowns had no further interest in the relationship between God and evil matter.

Indeed, for many Cathars, if earth played any role at all in the work of the good god, it was as the realm of punishment, be it temporal or eternal. Simply put, earth was hell. One Cathar text describes “this world” as “the last lake, the farthest earth, and the deepest hell,” while another asserts that “hell and eternal punishment are in this world only and nowhere else” (Anon., ‘An Exposure’ 1991:232; Rainerius Sacconi 1991:338). Even the most optimistic assessment made it purgatory, where the fallen, who would one day be redeemed, served their sentence. It was also the place where those who would not be saved were permanently trapped. Usually the work of the evil one, the earth was the appropriate environment for the demonic. If God’s New Day ever occurred, it must occur somewhere else, for the earth’s part in salvation history was as the realm of the damned.

It was the concept of earth as a place of suffering that allowed the Cathars to make sense of their own persecution. "Now we must speak of the tribulation and persecution and death which the apostles and their heirs had to suffer in time to come, doing good and forgiving, and how they must also endure in their own time. In just that way true Christians now are seen to act, those called heretics now, just as they were in the time of Paul ... It is made quite clear in Holy Scripture, as we pointed out in the preceding, how our Lord Jesus Christ showed through His words that in His name His disciples would bear tribulations and persecutions and even death in days to come" (Anon., *Liber de duobus* 1991:585). The Cathars saw their own suffering in direct continuity with the suffering of the New Testament Church. But despite drawing such inferences from clearly eschatological passages, no surviving Cathar document draws any eschatological conclusion from the New Testament linkage of suffering and end times. To the Cathars the point was simply that true followers of God suffer in this world.

The sentencing of fallen angels to the purgatory/hell of the earth was the extent to which most Cathars believed God punished sin, and even this was frequently attributed to Satan.⁴ Suffering on the earth was the province of the evil principle or his minions. So the punishment of sin in the Old Testament was almost universally attributed to the evil god. Even John of Lugio, who placed the flood and some other punishments of sin found in the Old Testament in another world, believed "when God inflicts punishment for sins upon His creatures, he does evil and does not comport himself as God but rather serves his adversary" (Rainerius Sacconi 1991:342-343). Most Cathars resolutely denied the role of the good god in the punishment of sin. It was the evil principle who "caused the goods of others to be plundered by force and ... even caused most bloody murders," when Israelites were encouraged to attack their foes in the Old Testament. The Old Testament deity "cannot be a true creator who, in the temporal world, caused the manifest and merciless destruction of so many men and women with all their children." In contrast, Jesus had commanded the love of one's enemies. "Therefore, it is evident that the Father of Jesus Christ did not cause the manifest destruction of so many men and women with all their children in this tem-

⁴ Revelation 12 tells of Satan's tail knocking a third of the stars from the heavens - this was commonly understood by the Cathars as referring to fall of angelic souls to their earthly prison (e.g. Anon., *De heresi* 1991:164). The one Cathar text which attributes the forthcoming destruction of Satan to God is discussed below.

poral world” (Anon., *Liber de duobus* 1991:563-64). The very elements of destruction were appropriate to the evil principle, not God - “sin, penalties, desolations, error, fire, punishment, chains, and the devil ... are the names either of the chief principle of evil or of his effects” (Anon., *Liber de duobus* 1991:559).

Cathar assumptions about the nature of reality led to a consistent exegesis of Biblical apocalyptic prophecy. Scripture passages universally understood within the Catholic tradition as referring to eschatology were interpreted by Cathars as speaking of the past.⁵ In some cases, specific verses were believed to have been prophecy when recorded by the Biblical writer, but had already seen fulfillment. One Catholic author records, “They assert that the Blessed Sylvester was the Antichrist of whom one reads in the Epistle ‘The son of perdition,’ is he ‘who is lifted up above all that is called God.’ From that day, they say, the Church was lost” (Bonacursus 1991:173). In other cases, the words of Scripture were understood as referring to ancient times. For some mitigated dualists the seven seals mentioned in Revelation had corrupted the earth, while the prophecies in the twelfth chapter of Revelation about the dragon cast down to earth were commonly interpreted as addressing events of the remote past. (Peter 1991:238; Anon., *De heresi*, 1991:164; Anon., *An Exposure* 1991:232; Moneta 1991:309). Such historicizing exegesis may have given rise to some unique Cathar doctrines, but in most cases it was a way of avoiding contradictions between Scripture and elements of Cathar thought, a process necessary for a group which wished to claim the Scripture as authority.⁶

⁵ In addition to direct assertions that certain apocalyptic Scriptural passages spoke of history and not the future, there was a form of ahistorical exegesis which moved in the same direction. Biblical apocalyptic which described conflict between God and Satan was drawn upon as evidence of dualism and applied to eternity, especially the eternal past, while ignoring the future-orientation of the context. See, for example, ‘The Secret Supper’ (1991:462-464).

⁶ I believe that in this instance exegesis usually followed doctrine rather than giving rise to it, though doubtless the process was interactive. The difficulty with assuming that Cathar doctrine arose entirely through this new understanding of Scripture is that in many cases the obvious reading of particular passages, especially in St. John’s Revelation, is to take it as future-oriented prophecy. For a group whose general exegetical method inclined towards literalism, the transformation of prophecies into history is best explained as being driven by doctrinal necessity.

Historicizing exegesis was critical for the development of one unusual aspect of Cathar thought. The Cathars denied a final judgment not because they believed God would not judge sin, but because they believed the judgment had already taken place; "the 'future' judgment has already been made and will not be made again" (Rainerius Sacconi 1991:338). It had taken place when fallen spirits were condemned to be trapped in physical matter on earth. For some this condemnation was eternal, and this world was hell. For others the condemnation was only temporary, and the number and identity of those to be saved was already determined by the good principle. "No soul will be saved other than the spirits who fell, who... will all be saved, ... other souls created by the devil, the evil principle, will be condemned This condemnation ... is here in the darkness of this world, that is, to sustain hunger, cold, weariness and the like ... souls will not be condemned, that is, by a second condemnation, because they are already damned. Thus they deny that future day when ... souls will be condemned because it is already past" (Anon., 'Brevis summula' 1991:356). The appeal of apocalypticism lacked a certain urgency for Cathars who believed that all the important decisions had already been made.

There is a difficulty in making positive statements about Cathar eschatology since there is little eschatological content to their surviving works. The extant comparisons with Catholic eschatology are often limited to merely noting the lack of a Cathar equivalent for various tenets of traditional Catholic eschatology. The diverse witnesses to Cathar thought do point to an eschatology, but it was an eschatology that was purely personal. While Catharism appears to lack the corporate eschatology of the Christian Church on which an apocalypticism could be based, there was, in fact, a Cathar equivalent to Catholic teaching about the future state of individual souls. It is this equivalent which can be compared to Catholic doctrine, an equivalent which is worth examining because it sheds light on the reason apocalypticism was incompatible with Cathar beliefs. It is important to note, however, that this evidence survives, primarily in inquisition registers, and that it has survived there solely because Cathar teaching on the subject contradicted Catholic doctrine. Other elements of the Cathar understanding of the eternal fate of the individual may well have existed which were acceptable to the inquisitors, but these would not have been recorded in their manuals.

As discussed above, some Cathars did believe in eternal punishment. Those who did believe in hell placed it on this earth. Others saw earth as a

purgatory, or a combination of purgatory and hell, a place of punishment from which some would be released. Until that time human life consisted of spiritual beings trapped in flesh, doomed to live out existence after existence in the cycle of reincarnation. It is here that Cathar teaching, despite its insistence on reincarnation and (occasionally) radical dualism, was in some ways comparable to Catholic doctrine.

The great difference in personal eschatology between Catharism and Catholicism is revealed in one of the central expressions of Cathar dualism, common to mitigated and unmitigated dualists alike, which was the denial of the bodily resurrection of those to be saved. Because what was to be saved was the spiritual soul created by God (or the good principle), and because salvation was escape from the prison of the body, which consisted of matter which was evil either by nature or by corruption, bodily resurrection had no place in Cathar hopes for the future. And this denial of bodily resurrection underlines some of the basic objections against traditional eschatology from within Cathar teaching. The earth has no role in God's plan of salvation as the resting place of bodies until the end times. Just as material bodies have no place in ultimate salvation, so the material earth has no place either. While the denial of a bodily resurrection does not exactly eliminate the possibility of the development of Cathar apocalypticism, it is consistent with the dominant trends of Cathar thought which placed salvation in the realm of the good god, entirely outside the realm of this world. And it is these trends which kept apocalypticism from developing within Catharism.

So what did Cathars believe about future reality? Cathars expected the souls of the redeemed to return to their natural home in God's heaven, where they would resume their garments and crowns which had been laid aside when the fallen angels were condemned to earthly existence. Cathars differed as to when this anticipated return would take place. Some Cathars came close to the idea of a final judgment when they believed Christ would return to take all the souls of the saved to heaven at once, though even in this scenario there is very little judgment to be made, since the fate of the souls had already been determined. Eternity for the saved would be lived out in God's land, where the sufferings of the human world were absent, and where many of the good things of the earth would be available for the blessed. Some Cathars expected that God would triumph over Satan in the future, but these Cathars believed Satan was not the evil principle, but merely the evil god's agent. No overturn of the evil order was to be anticipated. Cathars also differed on the future of the earth. Some emphasized its eternity as the evil

counterpart of God's eternal creation, others emphasized its material mutability in contrast to the eternal and spiritual creation of God. For the latter, earth would run down at some time in the future. But none of the Cathars really cared whether the earth continued eternally or faded from existence.

Thus far I have argued that apocalyptic eschatology was alien to Cathar theology. Yet there are passages in surviving Cathar literature, or medieval inquisitorial reports of Cathar beliefs, that seem to point to some elements of traditional apocalypticism within accepted Cathar doctrine. A Cathar inquirer, for instance, asks John about signs of the Day of Judgment, and is answered with a description of universal judgment, the destruction of the present world, and the advent of the glorious rule of God (Anon., 'The Secret Supper' 1991:463-464). Another Cathar text teaches "the true Lord God is about to destroy, together with all his powers, this mighty one who daily strives against God and His Creation ..." (Anon., *Liber de duobus* 1991:554-555). Yet another Cathar text suggests that the souls of the saved must await the final action of Christ to enter into their fully restored glory (Anon., 'Vision of Isaiah' 1991:453,456). But these statements are not unequivocal evidence of apocalyptic belief among Cathars. The *Liber de duobus principiis* that predicts the destruction of Satan also indicates that Satan is an agent of the evil principle, not the evil principle himself (1991:556). The same source charges the author's enemies with falsely teaching that the world will be destroyed (Anon., *Liber de duobus* 1991:539). Cathars did not share a common belief about the timeframe in which the souls of the saved would return to heaven; some held the spiritual resurrection occurred immediately after death, others in the remote future. Having Jesus gather the souls of all the elect (souls which have already left this earthly existence) does not, I think, necessarily count as apocalypticism. The only strong case for Cathar apocalypticism comes from the 'The Secret Supper,' which I will analyze in more detail. 'The Secret Supper' contains a description of end times events which consists largely of a catena of various apocalyptical passages from the Bible. The difficulty in assessing its value as a witness to Cathar belief is the fact that the document is not a Cathar creation, but a Bogamil text which had its literary origins among apocryphal writings outside Western Europe (Walter L. Wakefield 1991:447-449). In evaluating how much significance should be attached to the "Secret Supper" when making conjectures about Cathar theology, two specific questions need to be explored. The first is: to what extent does this document reflect actual Cathar beliefs as opposed to Bogamil theology? The second is: how would this document

have been interpreted by Cathar readers? As a Bogamil product, the 'Secret Supper,' if it does indeed present an apocalyptic interpretation of eschatology, is atypical of all surviving Cathar texts. There is not a single document produced by the Cathars themselves which shares its ideas or values, nor is there any evidence for Bogamil-like eschatology in Cathar material witnessed to by Catholic inquisitors. Under these circumstances one must be very cautious in assuming that the 'Secret Supper' actually reflects Cathar belief. This caution is extended if one takes into consideration the way in which 'The Secret Supper' would have been understood by the Cathars who circulated it in the West, and what they meant to assert by claiming the document as their own. The apocalyptic teaching of the 'Secret Supper' comes from stringing together a series of clearly eschatological passages from the Revelation of St. John. There are other examples of Cathar texts which consist chiefly of Scriptural quotations, such as the Cathar treatise incorporated in Durand of Huesca's *Liber contra manicheos*, or the "*Liber de duobus principiis*." The language of Scripture, at least in the work preserved by Durand, is allowed to express ideas not actually held by the Cathar author, or used to express ideas which are inconsistent with other portions of the document. In one obvious example, a Cathar writer asserts the principle of monotheism - yet the author was an absolute dualist who elsewhere clearly speaks of two gods (Walter L. Wakefield 1991:495). Cathars attempting to claim Biblical authority were unquestionably willing to affirm the teaching of acceptable Biblical books even, it seems, while they were denying the apparent meaning of the Biblical text. One is then forced to ask: how were these eschatological passages in the 'Secret Supper' understood by Cathars? 'The Secret Supper' presents various apocalyptic verses largely without commentary or explicit interpretation. Yet when Cathars, in their own literature, interpreted such eschatological passages they clearly and consistently rejected their apocalyptic implications. Indeed, considering the universal habit of historicizing exegesis among Cathars, it is not altogether clear that a Cathar could not interpret the text in an unapocalyptic manner. I am thus suggesting that 'The Secret Supper' provides no firm basis for claiming that the Cathars did indeed accept some elements of apocalyptic eschatology.

Considering the universal nature of apocalyptic expectations in Europe at the very time that Catharism achieved its greatest successes, any analysis of Cathar eschatology must explain the remarkable lack of any trace of such eschatological influence. The answer may lie in the role apocalypticism played in Western society in the Middle Ages. Medieval apocalypticism was closely

tied to the issue of social and religious reform. Apocalyptic expectations in the Middle Ages emerged in the midst of the Gregorian reform of the Church. These expectations rose in intensity as the influence of that movement faded. Cathars were not interested in reforming the Church or society, only in escaping from the world. The problems of the world provided no impetus to hope for a Day of the Lord when wrongs would be righted. For the Cathars the earth was hell, and there was no hope for amendment. Believing that neither society nor the earth were God's creation to redeem, Cathar hopes for redemption included neither society nor the earth, and so apocalyptic expectations exercised no attractions for them.

This article has tried to demonstrate that despite all the influences which might seem to indicate apocalyptic eschatology would be a natural element of Catharism, there is a logic behind the failure of such an eschatology to develop. Cathar dualism led naturally to a devaluation of the present world and a lack of interest in seeing the world transformed or redeemed by God. The acceptance of dualism does not require the rejection of apocalypticism. Historically, other dualists have held apocalyptic doctrines, including the Bogamils. But the rejection of apocalypticism by the Cathars does go hand in hand with their basic dualism.

The study of Cathar eschatology in this paper has indicated that Cathar theology was profoundly and consistently dualistic. Of course no one has ever questioned that Cathars were dualists, but the coherence of Cathar theology despite the great variety of its expressions points the way towards the conclusion that Cathar theology in all its manifestations genuinely expressed the beliefs of Cathars. The aspect of Catharism most neglected by modern scholars has been Cathar belief. The vitality of Cathar theology as a vehicle for expressing belief may indicate that some of the appeal of medieval Catharism was in the ideas it expressed. Its dualism may have made better sense of the world to average men and women than did the competing Catholic answers to life's questions. At very least Cathar theology deserves a more thorough and intensive study than it has yet received.

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The Prophetic and The Priestly: Reclaiming Preaching as Practical Theology

KENYATTA R. GILBERT

Early twentieth century homiletical voice, P. T. Forsyth, in his Lyman Beecher Lectures, published as *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (1907), acknowledged that Christian proclamation is addressed both to the church and beyond the church. Sadly, today, Christian preaching in North America is considerably confined to the sanctuary's four walls. Forsyth had it right when he professed, "The Christian preacher is no prophet to the public till he is a voice of the Church to the Church" (Forsyth: 92). Whether one considers the intellectually rousing sermon delivered at the pine desk or the spine-tingling rhetoric hurled from plexi-glass electronic pulpits, Forsyth's sapient claim insists that precedence be given to the church.

Despite the way in which Forsyth's stipulation for church proclamation seems to have been heeded in practice, an incessant erosion of pulpit authority in our times is discernible. The scope of the crisis is not solely associated with the preacher's prioritization of the house of worship. This article ventures further: pulpit authority goes on the blink when preaching is too narrowly determined by matters of personal piety and care of the soul to the blatant disregard of the public sphere.

Long-term and insidious are the health consequences to the church's voice when contemporary preachers and their congregations, in religious practice, collectively consent to invoke the Divine presence in the worship liturgy, only to depart from their religious experience without a patent conception of themselves as the "gathered and guided to be *sent*." My argument is very simple. Christian preaching, an inherently contextualized form of practical theology, at all times absconds its character and charge to the church and the public unless it reclaims its elemental prophetic and priestly voice¹.

¹The kingly or eldering voice, which illustrates the wisdom dimension in the function of preaching, arguably could also be explored, but in the interest of

Practical theology has the crucial task of “paying attention” to contexts. Our contexts matter: specifically, the prophetic and priestly work of affirming and clarifying the church’s mission and ministries in the service of Jesus Christ in the world.² No preaching as a form of practical theology today can avoid confronting the issue of pluralism in the context of the world-shaping historical phenomena of racial, economic and cultural diversity. Any act of public Christian preaching concerned with a gospel that addresses us and the social systems we inhabit never overlooks the role of context. Actually, to accord such importance to context in Christian preaching is to venture that no universal homiletical method aptly fits every faith community’s ecclesial orientation. The intention of this article is not to recommend yet another one-size-fits all homiletical method;³ instead, emphasis is given to a different homiletical matter altogether—the need for contemporary preachers to vigorously re-conceive the prophetic and priestly dimensions of preaching, that in religious practice, often become indiscernible or isolated from each other.

My first task is to provide a fuller explanation of the vital importance context plays in Christian preaching. Second, drawing on the call and commission account of the prophet Jeremiah, I theologically interpret the prophet’s call and authority as paradigmatic for reorienting homiletics. I argue that Christian preachers are imperatively summoned, as Jeremiah in

the scope of my argument, my reflections focus on the prophetic and priestly dimensions with the intent to evaluate their interrelatedness and the nature of their regrettable estrangement in religious practice.

²Drawing on a consensus model, Richard Osmer outlines four tasks of practical theology. First, the *descriptive-empirical task* asks: what is going on in the Christian preaching of this particular context? Second, the *interpretive task* addresses why this particular form of Christian preaching is taking place. Third, *norms of practice* ask: What forms ought Christian preaching to take in this context? And finally, *rules of art*, derived from a careful consideration of the three previous tasks, are the “how to” informed by the “why to” asking the primary question: How might Christian preaching be shaped to more fully embody the normative purposes of the Christian faith? (Cf. Richard R. Osmer, “The Role of Practical Theology in Protestant Religious Education Theory,” unpublished essay, 2000).

³New Homiletic theorists Henry H. Mitchell in *Black Preaching* (1970) and *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (2000) and Eugene Lowry’s *The Homiletical Plot* (1980) and *Doing Time in the Pulpit* (1985) are notable contemporary examples of homiletical theories exhibiting a foundationalist tendency.

his time, to a prophetic and priestly work. Particularly, the summoned preacher is answerable to a work of thinking more radically about ways to address contemporary faith communities and the social order. To be prophetic in our time might mean addressing the church's need to critically de-ideologize its preachments of fruitless obscurantist ventures that intertwine the church's faith commitments too naively with reigning national values and ideologies.

By using the paradigm of Jeremiah, I examine the problematic, i.e., the preacher's task to rethink the function of the prophetic and priestly dimensions of preaching, through offering a three-part working definition of prophetic preaching—one consistent with the pragmatic role of this biblical prophet of ancient Israel and with the preaching ministry of Jesus. My definition claims that, from within the Christian tradition, prophetic preaching:

- 1) is divinely inspired, highly contextualized, particular speech that proclaims and explains God's justice in terms of covenant obligation, to the end of evoking an alternative community in light of freedom and justice.
- 2) is never discontinuous with the past but finds resources internal to the tradition to call a specific community to its true identity,
- 3) stands under the community of faith to discover its state of health.⁴

Another way to express this is to claim that priestly preaching essentially strives to re-build communal trust and "bind up the wounded" by speaking to the brokenness and fragmentation of our present reality (Van Gelder, 1996: 29-32). It is not to be confused with pious word play devoted to empty ritual. However much faith communities tend to overemphasize the prophetic witness over the priestly element in religious practice, or vice-versa,

⁴See Gene M. Tucker, "Prophetic Speech" in *Interpreting the Prophets*, ed. James L. Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), and Hughes Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures, VI: The Biblical Period* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998, 16-7), and D. Stephen Long, "Prophetic Preaching" in *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, ed. William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

my aim is to challenge the modernist tendency that insists that one dimension must capitulate to the other.

To demonstrate what the reorientation of prophetic preaching I am advocating requires, the third segment of this reflection offers a theoretically reconceived view of preaching by drawing on two contemporary models of interdisciplinary work in practical theology. I survey, concisely, the *Revised Praxis Correlational* and the *Transformational* models. I demonstrate how a reconsideration of their basic tenets mutually correct one another. When dialectically appropriated, these models characterize how both the prophetic and the priestly dynamics enable a constructive way of re-conceiving preaching more holistically. Holistic preaching is biblical, contextual, and catalytic. These interdisciplinary models for practical theology — when dialectically related, synthesized, and appropriated in and for praxis — reveal a great deal about prophetic preaching. I believe that, through the scriptural images of prophet and priest, they intensify our theological understanding of preaching.

The final section of this paper offers more qualification to the issue at hand. I evaluate a modern homiletical proposal in which this prophetic and priestly synthesis is not present. I then contrast it with a pre-modern homiletic that steers closer to a prophetic and priestly synthesis. All homiletical proposals, whether pre-modern or postmodern, are futile strivings unless underscored by the Holy Spirit's power to create, revise, and transform preaching to greater faithfulness, fittingness, and fervent expression. The hope is that questions raised in this analysis will generate renewed interest within the church in the academy's critical role to encourage Christian preachers toward deeper theological reflection. Any homiletical theory with eyes closed to the sobering contextual crisis in the church and in contemporary society unwittingly refuses to recognize the visible erosion and de-centering of the Christian pulpit. If preaching in the twenty-first century is to be done at all earnestly, it has to reclaim a new mind-set.

PREACHING: CONTEXTUALLY SUMMONED

A recovery of a practical theological and homiletical mind-set requires that preaching's prophetic and priestly dimensions operate compatibly in a dynamic and dialectical partnership to guide and transform preaching's existing norms of practice. The prophetic and priestly functions of religious

practice are never actualized in a vacuum. Rather, they are visible in the earthy, mundane, daily experiences that over time become codified into the belief structures and values of a particular people in their specific communities. Thus, twenty-first century Christian preaching will stagger into a new age bankrupt if it overlooks the basic considerations of where people live, who people are, and what things people treasure. These interrelated considerations of context supply one's means for hearing and processing the gospel.

The practical theology subdiscipline of homiletics generally assumes the task of examining the nature and function of preaching. Accordingly, one crucial aspect of its theological and historical task is the duty of distinguishing preaching's nature and function from other forms of rhetorical speech. Though no scholarly consensus exists on a definition for preaching which would satisfy all communities of faith, preaching, broadly conceived, is theologically authorized speech, requiring rhetorical judgments on what is fitting and appropriate in the aural/oral proclamation of God's Word. In view of this, the Word of God itself essentially authorizes concern for the context of the receptor, and context, therefore, is not inconsequential to the preaching task (Kay 2003: 34-5).

St. Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* (*De Doctrina Christiana*), the earliest proto-practical theology textbook on the subject of homiletics, displays marks consistent with the aforementioned definition (Augustine, 1958: 143-4). Importantly, *On Christian Doctrine*, as tightly joined as it is to Cicero's classical rhetoric, refuses to cower from drawing crucial theological distinctions and contextual considerations for Christian preaching.⁵

Our preaching contexts matter when our concern is the gospel. There is no gospel "for us" that is not clothed in human culture and is not at the same time mediated through the socio-cultural concerns of where we live, who we are, and what we value. Matters of context require our attention to matters of change. Speaking on the general law of intellectual life, Hans-Georg Gadamer's maxim, "Things that change force themselves on our attention

⁵ See Nancy Lammers Gross' Ph. D. Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, "A Re-Examination of Recent Homiletical Theories in Light of The Hermeneutical Theory of Paul Ricoeur," 1992, which notes six observable homiletical components that emerge from Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*: (1) the purpose of preaching, (2) the message of preaching, (3) the person of the preacher, (4) the hearer, (5) the context, and (6) pedagogy, pp. 24-5. Each component, I would argue, has a direct or indirect bearing on contextualization.

far more than those that remain the same" (Gadamer 1960: xxiv) fittingly beckons every practical theologian back to the primary task of "paying attention." Stephen Bevans is right when he claims that to understand the Christian faith contextually "is really a theological imperative" (Bevans 1992:1).

A PROPHETIC AND PRIESTLY PARADIGM

BUILDING UP, TEARING DOWN

Practical theology is a prophetic ministry of and for the church — and of and for society — when it interprets and acts, in the service of Jesus Christ, within human community toward the goal which Jacob Fiet describes as the actualization and maintenance of the God and human relationship (Heitink 1999: 120, 130-1). Prophetic witness is never imported; it is mediated, sent to, and worked out in community, not in isolation. In the book of Jeremiah, for example, the metaphors of prophet and priest are synthesized. On the one hand in (6:1-6), just prior to Jeremiah's "temple sermon" (7:1-15), Jeremiah, believing the temple and its ritual practice were tools of social control,⁶ exercises a prophetic function when he pronounces God's indictment upon "the shepherds who have scattered the sheep" (i.e. the religious and monarchical leadership) for their evil doings. On the other hand the prophet exercises a priestly function as well, because he is nonetheless "called to be a child of the tradition, one who has taken it seriously in the shaping of his or her own field of perception and system of language."⁷ From his priestly pedigree⁸ we may infer that his lineage afforded him a unique closeness to the tradition, especially temple worship⁹. Even if this closeness had only a rudimentary significance in the scope of the prophet's work, his cultural

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming*. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmanns Publishing, 1998), 78.

⁷ Bruggemann 1998:12.

⁸ Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, of the priest of Anathoth (likely descendants of Abiathar, a priest in David's court banished for aligning himself with David's rival Adonijah [see Ch.1]).

⁹ Outside the temple motif, Jeremiah functions as a priest sent by God to declare a word of hope and comfort to God's people taken into Babylonian exile (see 29:11-14).

grooming shaped his worldview and thus, plausibly, provided him with the platform needed to preach his temple sermon.

The Hebrew prophet Jeremiah is paradigmatic in that he receives an appointment from God to a work of “building up, and tearing down” (Jeremiah 1: 10). Jeremiah and other biblical prophets were often called into community—a community that often stood against their work. Elijah hid in a cave fleeing Jezebel’s wrath; Jonah rebelled against his assignment to Tarshish; and even Jeremiah lamented his struggle to Jerusalem. But without question, each prophet underwent transformation by virtue of his prophetic responsibility to the ongoing task of forming and reforming the communities into which he was sent. Jeremiah’s life of service alongside the community in which he was called, for example, was inseparable from his own spiritual process. And while not all prophecy was met with enthusiasm, for example, Daniel’s interpretations for King Belshazzar (Daniel 5: 5—6: 1-10) or Nathan’s parable to David (2 Samuel 12: 1-15), the Spoken Word is not conceived in, or directed to, or spoken in, a vacuum. Consequently, a practical theology that makes no attempt to work in the interest of forming and reforming communities, nor to struggle to emancipate the socially and economically crippled, and the spiritually oppressed voices on the margins, is, despite its good intentions, always impractical.

FOSTERING COMMUNAL TRUST

Practical theology, at the same time, is a priestly work of and for the church and society. The nurturing and nourishing dynamics of the church’s life must always be critically examined. Some churches die from cultivating attitudes and behaviors of apathetic resignation, i.e., by neglecting the task of “building up and tearing down”—fostering the necessary bonds of priestly and prophetic witness. Other communities meagerly subsist, starved of any teleological aim, non-attentive to the wounded who desperately need soul care. The African American church, my own religious and cultural home, exemplifies why the priestly dimension is vital. Countless African American congregations experience a whirlwind of ecclesiological and organizational re-structuring, essentially caught in a crisis of transition. Many traditional and historic congregations founded and organized in urban or rural locales contend with the growing phenomenon of physical displacements, class division, and demographic shifts in neighborhoods. It is not uncommon to observe America’s burgeoning black middle class ritually commute into their urban churches for Sunday worship only to return straight away to their

suburban quarters and corporate vocations oblivious of the larger black under class in urban neighborhoods. As a consequence, this recent phenomenon tosses to the wind an infrastructure or tangible apparatus for building communal trust. Churches that exist exclusively as historical landmarks and spiritual fallout shelters, rather than as representatives of an active presence of God's gathered and missionally sent, lose the ability to claim any strong connection to the communities into which they are called to serve, to their peril.

Moreover, many intimate and traditional African American churches are evolving into megachurches — a sprouting trend. Many black megachurches, I find, too easily accommodate their charter and mission to the reigning "business model" ideologies. They are less likely to be places that provide a sense of family and community, i.e., close-knit and supportive relationships for members. On the contrary, these houses of worship are primarily thought of as providers of religious goods and services to its constituents (Becker, 1999: 13). The ecclesiological questions in these transforming congregations are no longer exclusively based upon physical and spiritual survival as much as upon an emphasis on clarifying the vision and terms of corporate missional objectives. In what is clearly seen as a crisis of transition, the African American church stands at the precipice of dilemma and hope, asking: "Where do we grow from here?", "What can we hold onto?", and "What do we as black Christians theologically believe and adhere to?" Accordingly, this outlook creates fertile ground for priestly preaching. Generally, this crisis of transition has caused many black preachers and their congregants to develop bifurcated identities: on the one hand, wanting to hold on to the folkways and mores of local traditions, and on the other hand, wanting to re-think and re-negotiate congregational identity in ways that are technologically progressive, community-focused, but in many cases, nontraditional (Trulear, 1997: 120). Bifurcated identities necessitate congregational strategies that reclaim and revise traditions and modes of religious practice.

Marvin McMickle's recent homiletical proposal addresses the issue of bifurcated identities. While centrally concerned with formulating practical ways to preach to African American churches, McMickle assesses demographic changes that point to an important and new ecclesiastical occurrence—the rising presence of professional class blacks occupying church pews. Importantly, McMickle challenges many of the outmoded congregational strategies for doing ministry in black churches, and, though a provocative tone characterizes his preaching insights on the subject of racism,

McMickle fails to provide an adequate remedy. He seemingly gives exclusive attention to the "priestly" dimension, one of Peter J. Paris's four ideal leadership types (1991), as an apt model to help middle-class blacks cope and respond to the challenge of racism. "If the church is to have a relevant ministry as it moves into the twenty-first century," contends McMickle, "we must begin speaking less about race and more about class" (2000: 5). Citing Paris, McMickle's preacher assumes the role of priest because "Priests have helped the people to endure realities they cannot readily change and to make constructive use of every possible opportunity for self-development under the conditions of bondage" (McMickle 2000: 25).

A valid recovery of the priestly function is desirable, indeed; however, McMickle's homiletic ostensibly neglects the complementary role of the prophetic. Any polarizing resolution that privileges the priestly over the prophetic, predictably, fails to account for the ways in which Christian praxis, at every level, must hold the priestly and prophetic roles as indispensable one to the other. Actually, as a ground for survival and social transformation, Paris better conceives the implications and nature of the priestly and prophetic dialectic when he writes:

The black Christian tradition has exercised both priestly and prophetic functions: the former aiding and abetting the race in its capacity to endure the effects of racism, the latter utilizing all available means to effect religious and moral reform in the society at large.¹⁰

Only a reciprocally enriching prophetic and priestly conception of a practical theology for homiletics can bolster the health of the church's proclamation. A recent publication in black homiletical theory, Cleophus J. LaRue's *The Heart of Black Preaching*, breaks significant ground in its analysis of the various realms in which the black sermon is given birth. LaRue's description of the "domains of experience"¹¹ provides a broader and keener awareness of the prophetic and priestly dynamic.

¹⁰ Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, 11.

¹¹ LaRue lists five broad "domains of experience" that appear in black preaching that constitute a paradigm. They are: personal piety, care of the soul, social justice, corporate concerns, and maintenance of the institutional church. (Cf. Cleophus J. LaRue's *The Heart of Black Preaching*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, 21).

On the whole, in reference to preaching's priestly work, a practical theology that makes no attempt to work in the direction of helping congregations negotiate faithful possibilities for creatively synthesizing their historical and ritual identities — while consciously reforming and affirming their charter in modern times — is always impractical.

TOWARD A PROPHETIC AND PRIESTLY SYNTHESIS

The prophetic and priestly dimensions of religious practice must function in correlation to offer an adequate biblical and theological bridge of meaning and action in the service of Jesus Christ today. No homiletic is sufficient without this theological bridge.

Practical theology, inherently interdisciplinary, draws upon theology as well as the human sciences. Interdisciplinary reflection is not unique to practical theology but traverses many of the theological disciplines. Furthermore, as it has once been claimed, "all roads lead to Rome," a similar age-old adage rings true, "All theological roads lead to preaching." The issue of interdisciplinary thinking is always relevant to the discussion of preaching. How the considered judgments about which fields *qua* fields are most germane to practical theology as these fields relate to and inform contextual considerations in the practice of preaching directly impacts the descriptive and hermeneutical agenda of homiletics. I turn our attention now to a brief consideration of two contemporary models of interdisciplinary thinking: the *Revised Praxis Correlational* and the *Transformational*.

Matthew Lamb, a major proponent of the *revised praxis* correlational model (in contrast to early Tillichian-styled *simple* correlationalists) attempts to move away from correlations at the level of theory alone. In his project he advocates fostering a mutually influential conversation between new social liberation movements and the Christian community — a conversation focused upon the *praxis* of each partner. Praxis is viewed as the struggle against some form of oppression. Here, interdisciplinary reflection is engaged when critical social theorists ask legitimate questions of theologies and ideologies. Lamb's seminal text, *Solidarity with Victims* (1982), is grounded in the conviction that "the cries of the victims are the voice of God (*Vox victimarum vox Dei*)". Lamb's chief claim is, "the scandal of the Cross is the scandal of God identified with all the victims of history in the

passion of Christ. That identification was not a passive acceptance of suffering but an overpowering transformation whereby the forces of death and evil were overcome through the resurrection" (Lamb 1982: 1). In Lamb's political theology it is agapic praxis (self-transcending love that breaks the hold of bias on the human mind and heart) that finds correlation with noetic (intellectual) praxis.

Accordingly, Lamb offers two fundamental claims. His first claim is that solidarity with the victims of history cannot be genuine if it: 1) trivializes their histories of suffering by muting their cries and their claim on our consciences, or 2) seeks to distance itself from these histories of sufferings by switching places and victimizing the victors, thereby, ironically, making the violent bias of the victors its own. His second claim is that options for praxis which are open to genuine solidarity with the concrete histories of the suffering are, in fact, numerous, because of the pervasiveness of bias. The religious option is constituted in the conviction that to struggle for the realization of justice in history affirms that humankind is not simply on its own. Fundamentally, humans cannot justify themselves.

Lamb maintains that the cost of discipleship is to be prophetic toward the goal of orthopraxis (right action). Religious practices under dominating authorities, Lamb observes, can too easily fall into sacralism. When God is identified in this way, "priests will protect—but for a price" (1982:11). That is why there is an inimical relationship between sacralism and the sacralist bias. God becomes identified with the mighty and the powerful, not the victims. His anthropocentric turn to the victim fashions a political theology that "develops both a *hermeneutics of recovery* regarding the transcending values incarnated in overcoming the many histories of suffering, and a *hermeneutics of suspicion* regarding the dehumanizing disvalues alienating and distorting history" (1982:11).

While much of what Lamb claims supports a critical recovery of the prophetic in religious practice, two weaknesses in this liberationist model come into view. First, Lamb too narrowly conceives of God's voice as merely the cries of victims. Is this the only image of God to be derived from Scripture? The self-critical component of the necessity for the transformation of the individual is severely marginalized by Lamb's stronger emphasis on the critical analysis of systems and structures for an emancipatory end. Second, because Lamb does not seek a broad enough institutional base for his "new way of doing theology," its practical and constructive agenda are imbalanced, despite his program's strengths. Rather than enlisting local church commu-

nities and pastors as participant respondents to the question of what is at stake in religious practice, Lamb's revised praxis approach stops short. He only seeks collaboration with labor unions, secular racial and ethnic organizations, feminists, scientists, and academic theologians. And in his choice of academic theologians, he completely overlooks the serious liberation theological force in the works of James Cone.

However carefully one draws on the strength of Lamb's prophetic claims for developing a practical theological framework, a subsequent question must be asked of Lamb's practical theology: "What comes after liberation?" In the past, the traditional liberationists' responses to matters of spiritual oppression and humanity's redemption from corporeal sin against the Creator have been imperceptible or unsatisfactory. For this reason, James E. Loder's transformational model of interdisciplinary work, when held in dialectic tension with Lamb's insights, can give an intrinsic supplement to the prophetic claims of Lamb's model.

Loder's transformational scheme presupposes that theology and its non-theological partners stand, conceptually, in an asymmetrical bipolar relational unity. Loder claims that this unity is analogous to unity of the divine and human persons in Christ, as this relationship was articulated by the Council of Chalcedon, and later re-interpreted by Barth and his interpreters. According to a Barthian interpretation, three key aspects of the divine-human relationality of the Christ are indissoluble differentiation, inseparable unity, and indestructible order. Following Chalcedon, Loder argues for an interdisciplinary relationship between theology and the human sciences constituted in such a Christological pattern demonstrating the same three key aspects. In the second person in the Trinity the divine and human natures coexist constantly without the reduction of one to the other, with the divine having logical and ontological priority over the human. Loder calls this priority "marginal control".

Accordingly, in the transformational model, the human sciences, though "marginally controlled" by theology, are taken seriously. Loder presumes that the field of practical theology has a theological center, in which the generative problematic lies not in the field's practices but at its core, that is, in the question itself of "why" the relationship between these two phenomena (theology and the human sciences) is, indeed, such a problem (1999: 359). In his attempt to reorient the field, Loder's "interdisciplinary and self-involving" methodology strives to establish a relationship between theology and the human sciences in which the divine and human realities are two quali-

tatively distinct realities working in an inclusive theory of divine-human action. Any reliance on assumptions — from nontheological fields — that are inconsistent with Christian theology and Christian revelation must be negated, so that the positive contributions of these fields to religious practice can be appropriated. Thus, the logic of transformation is a process of double negation.

In “Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: The Interdisciplinary Issue” (1999), Loder compendiously outlines five core dimensions of practical theology: historical, systematic, ecclesial, operational, and contextual. The *historical* dimension traces practical theology from its biblical and early church roots through Schleiermacher and onward. The second, *systematic* dimension, is given methodological priority in Loder’s program. With the person of Jesus Christ as described in the Chalcedonian formulation as his starting point, one systematic task is “to point to the mystery of God’s nature and action, organizing the human action disciplines in constructive relationship with theological disciplines” (1999:361-2). In contrast to Lamb’s revised praxis model, Loder claims that the baseline of a viable practical theological approach must be theological, not experiential, for if it is experience-based, “the relationality may implicitly legitimate incoherence since it overtly rejects universals and affirms justice and narratives as universally applicable.” (1999:363).

The third, *ecclesial*, dimension is where the locus of practical theology becomes most visible through its manifestation in a realm of accountability “to the people of God and to the Spirit of God by whom the life of the church is created and sustained” (1999:361). The *operational* dimension is fourth. Here, at the confluence of the historical, systematic, and ecclesial dimensions of such religious practices as preaching, educational instruction, and counseling are operationalized into ministry forms. By operationalization, Loder means “these practices are not the core of the discipline, but they are essential to the field of practical theology and often bring the central problematic of the field to its sharpest focus” (1999:361). Finally, the *contextual* dimension is noted. “Social and cultural trends and movements inevitably permeate all dimensions of the field of practical theology and have direct bearing on how the field is construed and how the disciplines may undergo change historically, yet without departing from the central problematic.” (1999:361) Notwithstanding this detail, little else regarding the role of context is stated. In the appendix to his essay Loder ostensibly strives to explain how transformation is not solely about the transformation of the indi-

vidual. He points out that transformation is, instead, operative for *all* of human action (e.g., biology, psychology, religion). Nevertheless, if one is pursuing a holistic practical theology, Loder's contextual and operational dimensions are in need of a material expansion.

Norms of practice are contextually conditioned. The ways in which practices such as preaching are actualized in the present always imply the historically and linguistically mediated stories which highlight the crucial importance of context. In light of this claim, Gadamer's hermeneutical theory, a project with phenomenological concerns about what happens to us when we say we understand, reminds the contemporary preacher-practical theologian that understanding (*Verstehen*), especially the understanding of sacred texts, is always a connection *between* the horizons, of our assumptions, culture, and tradition *toward* the horizon of the text.

The transformational model is not without its limitations for doing theology contextually. Structurally, the Loderian model is too university-based, which corresponds rather closely to Lamb's noetic praxis. This means that Loder's structuralist framework relies too heavily on knowledge gained at an academic university rather than drawing from the formulations of indigenous theology in particular ecclesial communities. Granted, for Loder, proximate norms and goals are manifested in *koinonia*. But according to Loder's program of relating theology and science to guide practical theological practice, practitioners, it appears, would need to possess a strong knowledge of theological themes and scientific terminology. Ironically, the theological conundrum here becomes one of access. What practical ways can this model be shared and implemented with rural and urban communities of faith who are often disconnected from cutting-edge academic resources? How could they effectively construct for themselves a *bona fide* theology consistent with Loder's transformational scheme?

Despite these limitations, the transformational model, nevertheless, offers the preacher-practical theologian a theologically robust model for conceptualizing the pattern of humanity's once-for-all and ongoing redemption. Regrettably, what remains underdeveloped, I think, is a discussion of how his proposed methodology could be refashioned to embody more fully the normative purposes of the Christian life in particular contexts of experience. On the one hand, a firm regulative framework is established in Loder's transformational model — a framework which is crucial for priestly work. Yet on the other hand, a fuller illustration of the practical aspect, one which not only conceptualizes Jesus Christ as the normative center of Christian

faith and witness, but concurrently envisages him as inculturated, shared, and demonstrated in community and in the world, seems to be needed. Such an emphasis would buttress Loder's Christological claims toward a clearer conceptualization of the prophetic.

PROPHETIC AND PRIESTLY SYNTHESIS: IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

A critical appropriation of the rudiments of both the liberationist and transformational interdisciplinary models points the preacher as a practical theologian toward a more authentic way of preaching and doing theology contextually. It values the reflexive and introspective character of theory and the concrete realities of praxis in contemporary religious practice. Hence, an approach to homiletics that synthesizes the prophetic and priestly is fertile ground for meaningfully addressing the state of the health of the church's proclamation in our times. A biblically authorized confluence of the images of prophet and priest distinguishes the worth among the liberationists whose tendentious cry for justice and moral commitments demand more of preaching than Christ-centered sermons; it was Jesus who stood with scroll in hand in a Nazareth synagogue ordaining the prophetic work (Luke 4: 16-20).

Today's preacher-prophet is consecrated to religious practice in the lineage of the biblical prophets and Jesus Christ; to the task of "telling again" the religious community to "pay attention"; to struggle against concrete forms of oppression; to critically theorize and hold theology accountable to its questions about justice, dominance, and freedom; to remind the academic elite of the ever-widening theory-constructing gap between the intellectually privileged and those on the margins; to rehearse in the minds of religious communities that Christian conversion demands a withdrawal from the sacralist bias that comes with orthodoxy without orthopraxy. And, even if prophetic preaching were to accomplish this aim, a true synthesis would then be only partly realized. Not until a critical correlation is made with the transformational model of interdisciplinarity can preaching be, in reality, practical theology.

While a constructive synthesis works through these particular frameworks, holding in tension points of incongruence, the broad contours of what each interdisciplinary model proposes, at least conceptually, beckons the contemporary preacher as practical theologian back to the primary task

of attentiveness. Transformationalists recognize that *theoria* and *praxeis* are brought into conformity with Jesus Christ. Indeed, the key for Loder is the revelation of Jesus Christ and His mission and the work of His Spirit that must be allowed to overhaul, replace and define again the philosophical foundations of theory and practice. Only then can the scientific and social historical expression of this relationality be transformed.

HOMILETICS: PITFALLS AND POSSIBILITIES

The modern homiletical approach of neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth on the whole, disregards the role of context in the task of practical theology. The transformational-liberationist synthesis I am proposing is not at work in his homiletics. For Barth, theology is *Nach-Denken*, a process of *thinking afterwards* about what is contained in God's self-revelation. Therefore, in Barth's homiletical view, the preacher is not really in conversation with Scripture; rather, the preacher is a mere pulpit puppeteer while the academic theologian is accorded a greater textual intimacy in the duty of dogmatic reflection. Consequently, in Barth's homiletical strategy, the Scriptures are not amenable to an authentic interrogation of the questions the preacher has for the text. Instead, Barth contends that the movement from text to sermon is always uni-directional. God speaks through scripture and the preacher is simply one who is commandeered by God. Everything is up to God; there is never a turn to the hearer. This implies passive reception. Therefore, for the task of preaching, interdisciplinary conversation with the human sciences is largely unwarranted.

The locus of preaching's authority — and the requisite accountability of the preacher — does not derive from the congregation, but from the Word of God, which God alone speaks. The job description of the preacher, according to Barth, relegates the preacher to the single status of a performer of theology. Barth miscalculates the theory—praxis interchange, and as a consequence, his homiletic is rendered conspicuously inadequate for practical theology. It is theologically problematic to hold that the business of serious reflection on the mission and doctrine of the church and the Bible is the duty of "theologians." Disappointingly, Barth leaves all theory-formulation to professional academicians. On this point, it must be conceded that Barth probably held a different expectation of the professional theologian's relationship to the church than we do today. Being a church practitioner par-

ticipating in the life of the church was a *sine qua non* for being a theologian in Barth's day. Regrettably, these two roles are not necessarily conjoined in the postmodern milieu.

Barth's 1931-32 lectures on preaching in Bonn, Germany, advanced his theological understanding of the phenomena of what happens when preaching takes place. These lectures were published as *Homiletics* in 1991. It is here that we encounter Barth's two-part definition of preaching:

Preaching is the Word of God which he himself speaks, claiming for the purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words that are relevant to contemporaries by those who are called to do this in the church that is obedient to its commission. Preaching is an attempt enjoined upon the church to serve God's own Word, through one who is called thereto, by expounding a biblical text in human words and making relevant to contemporaries in intimation of what they hear of God himself (Barth 1991: 44).

Barth provides the modern world with a fervid Christological formulation for preaching, defining it as the Word of God in which God alone speaks. In his *Gottingen Dogmatics*, what must be emphasized in preaching, he contends, is that the "kerygma" is proclaimed. The kerygma, he believes is the essential core of preaching (Barth, 1991a: 24). Furthermore, preaching consists of (1) revelation or the Word of God, (2) the church as the context for preaching, (3) preaching as divine command, (4) an understanding of a special ministry for the preacher, (5) the recognition that preaching is always only an attempt, (6) the realization that preaching always relates to Scripture, (7) an understanding of preaching as individual speech, (8) a recognition that preaching is an exposition of the biblical text, and (9) the acknowledgment that the Holy Spirit is preaching's starting point, center, and conclusion.

Despite these strong elements, there are at least four conspicuous weaknesses that render Barth's homiletic approach inadequate for nurturing the priestly and prophetic dimensions of preaching. First, Barth fails to give sufficient attention to the shared community's ownership of the theology proclaimed. Staunchly visible is Barth's apparent commitment to hierarchical and class designations within the social configuration of the institutional church. The preacher is accorded the special status of herald, although the personal and charismatic authority of the preacher, which are partly legitimated and affirmed by the context and its receptors, is seemingly inconse-

quential for Barth. Consequently, there is no perspicuity in his homiletic regarding how orthodoxy and orthopraxy indwell, inform, revise, and dialogue with each other. Second, his homiletical program gives too much agency to the preacher, not based on what the preacher proclaims, but rather concerning that with which the preacher is entrusted. To preach, in Barth's view, is not to reflect on or bring to the light of Scripture the missional practices of the church, social justice issues, or even to foster a concern for piety, all matters of contextualization. Rather, declares Barth, preaching is the announcement of what God has done—*Deus dixit!* Barth uses this Latin term, which means, *God has spoken*, to indicate “a special, once-for-all, contingent event” (Barth 1991a: 59) Preaching is *in toto*, therefore, reflection back on this decisive event.

Third, despite his strong Christological formulation for preaching, his homiletical program emanates from a theology that lacks apocalyptic force. Although he is a dialectical theologian, Barth rejects the ability of the preacher and the church to address, engage, and translate the modern concerns of secular society. His homiletical strategy seemingly views human communities as “universal” in their question sets and their cultural composition, and for this reason, he fails to distinguish and anticipate the ecclesial diversity in Christian communities outside his *sitz im Leben*. Despite these marks of deficiency, I would agree that much of Barth's theological response in opposition to the “all-too-accommodating” course of theological liberalism of his time was not only imperative, but in significant respects pragmatically sound and necessary for the preservation of dogmatic reflection.

On the contrary, St. Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* provides a significant counter to Barth's homiletic. Above all, Augustine claims in Book III. 19 that preaching is contextual; preaching demands careful attention to what is proper to places, times, and persons. Viewing eloquence as value-neutral, Augustine suggests that his readers find truth wherever it may be discovered. This search was better known as making the most of “Egyptian gold” or putting secular things to use in the service of sacred purposes.

From Augustine's homiletical wisdom, there are at least five identifiable contextual rules of art for the preacher-practical theologian. The first is to recognize that if one cannot speak or preach eloquently, then that one should strive no less to speak wisely. Though the people benefit less, they still benefit. Second, the preacher is first a petitioner (praying for him/herself and others) before he or she is a speaker. Third, preaching is a three-fold task, which requires the preacher: (1) conciliate the oppressed, (2) arouse the remiss,

and (3) teach the ignorant of the subject and what to expect. Fourth, preachers do well to aim for clarity over eloquence. If this means that vernacular speech brings clarity, by all means it should be used. Finally, Christian preaching is popular rhetoric; a preacher should be able to address the ignorant as well as the educated.

Ignoring what Augustine's considers the essentials of homiletical skill, Barth's commissioned and called preacher is not only advised to shun imagination and the tools for eloquence as nonessentials, but is encouraged to do so because preaching must not get lost in the layers of extra material and forget its core—the kerygma. Neither missionary, panegyric, nor prophetic preaching forms are explicitly considered by Augustine or Barth. Consistent with Augustine, however, is Barth's focus on liturgical preaching. Both strongly emphasize the institutional church as the place for preaching. For Barth, preaching in the fullest sense is preaching that is accompanied and illuminated by the sacraments (1991a: 58-59).

CONCLUSION: A VOICE RECLAIMED IS A VOICE OF HOPE

Preaching in the twenty-first century is no small task. It demands a resolute commitment from the preacher to nurture and nourish both the prophetic and priestly dimensions of religious practice. Only a homiletic understood as a practical theology, and which reclaims for preaching a catalytic role for transforming human action in the service of Jesus Christ, can hope to be profitable in a fragmented postmodern and increasingly pluralistic world. I have argued that the primary concern of practical theology is the actualization and maintenance of the God—human relationship, and has as its core concern the health of the church's proclamation. In view of this, practical theology must affirm the vital role of nurturing both the priestly and prophetic dimensions of religious practice; for it is only in light of both of these that Christian preaching can begin to uphold and clarify the church's mission within the world in the service of Jesus Christ to the glory of God. Surely, any self-described practical theology that is disassociated from this crucial claim either veers away from its lifeblood of Christian hope and settles for the maintenance of social preservation, or too quickly forecloses on the encounter with God, who awakens in us new gifts, courtesy of the Holy Spirit's power to verify and refine existing norms of practice—norms that become obscured by traditionalism and apathetic resignation.

Cast in the hopeful light of priestly and prophetic reunion, Christian preaching need not file for bankruptcy. The Good News proclaimed is the genuine hope that holds together faith's horizon. This hope interprets human action by means of the whole counsel of Scripture and the idiosyncratic channels of rich and varied traditions. But to secure this hope, preachers and homileticians must reclaim that precious commodity that preaching has too easily forfeited—its voice, for the sake of the church's health. When preaching recovers its authentic voice, the clarion and prophetic utterances of liberationists will find their theological soul mate in the priestly work of transformationalists whose unified witness call to mind the Spirit's power to summon individuals into personal introspection and consecration before their invariable reentrance into the world.

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Nature and Human Nature in Calvin's Theology: A Prophetic Voice for Environmental Ethics

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Prophetic ministry, though rooted in the history of ancient Israel, continues to form a vital part of the 21st century Protestant Christian church. In its more historical meaning, this term draws us back to the Old Testament prophets. Faced with new and ever-changing situations, the prophets of ancient Israel repeatedly looked to the Torah for guidance. On the one hand, they drew on these ancient texts. The historic distance of the Torah texts provided them with fresh opportunities for critical insights into their current situation. On the other hand, the prophets also creatively reshaped these ancient texts. The challenges each generation faced brought them fresh insights into the meaning and application of these texts (Brueggeman 2001; Heschel 1962). They entered into a living conversation¹ with their past, thus providing a model of prophetic ministry for future religious communities in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Walter Brueggemann, in *The Prophetic Imagination*, characterizes prophetic ministry as “offering an alternative perception of reality” (2001:116). Central are the two following elements: (1) one's imaginative openness, particularly to alternatives to dominant modes of thought and life, (2) one's concrete engagement in the present in an effort to begin to live out these alternatives.

In keeping with this spirit, this paper seeks to provide an example of such prophetic ministry for the 21st century by looking at John Calvin's theology in conversation with contemporary environmental ethics. The concerns raised by the field of environmental ethics pose a serious challenge to reli-

¹ I would like to acknowledge my colleague Rachel S. Baard for introducing me to this term ‘living conversation’ in the context of hermeneutical theological method. See (Tracy 2000).

gious communities today. They ask what resources our religious traditions provide for the task of living responsibly in a technologically advanced and environmentally problematic society. My goal in this paper is to demonstrate that John Calvin's 16th century theology and exegesis provide rich resources for this 21st century task. Just as the Old Testament prophets drew faithfully and creatively on the Torah, so Protestant Christians can draw faithfully and creatively on another piece of our past to bring insight to our environmental challenges today.

In what follows I will first take a look at the current discussion on environmental ethics. The emphasis will fall primarily on that strain that attempts to soften boundaries between the concepts 'nature' and 'human beings.' In a second section, I will examine Calvin's theology. An initial look at contemporary Calvin studies and Calvin's 1559 *Institutes* will serve to guide us into Calvin's biblical commentaries, specifically his commentaries on the Gospel of John. Finally, in a concluding section, I will bring Calvin into conversation with environmental ethics. The goal in this final section will be the following: to critically identify the prophetic voice that Calvin can bring to Protestant Christian churches as they seek to minister to the human and nonhuman communities with whom they live.

A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT FOR PROPHETIC MINISTRY: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

As both secular and Christian environmental ethicists address current environmental conditions, many have highlighted the importance of the theoretical task. They ask, 'Are there distortions in our concepts of 'nature' and of 'human beings' that, if corrected and rethought, could fuel beneficial behaviors towards the world of nature?' In this first section, I will identify a few strains of this discussion, strains that challenges the often too-neatly-distinguished categories of the natural and the human.

In the past four decades of environmental ethical thought and practice, the value of human beings has frequently been set *in opposition to* that of nature. More specifically, the unique valuing of human beings above animals and nature has been viewed as inimical to any form of solid environmental ethics. One of the dominant frames for this discussion involves the following two categories: anthropocentrism and biocentrism. A number of thinkers focus on the value of human beings (anthropocentrism) and others on all of life

(biocentrism).² In each instance, the specific grouping is taken as the priority value in relation to which all others are to be considered.

For example, biocentrists, or more specifically, ecocentrists such as Aldo Leopold value the biotic community most highly. In this vein, the good of the biotic community trumps the moral worth of individuals. It is not that human individuals are ignored. However, their value is assessed only with reference to the health of the more collective entity known as "land" (Callicott 1998:63).

An Alternative Voice

While this larger discussion has the merit of clarifying the moral categories to be considered and of proposing a number of careful logical arguments, I find a subset of this discussion, perhaps now an emerging alternative voice of this discussion, particularly compelling. Some proponents of this alternative position seek to bring human beings back into the discourse of environmental ethics. 'Are not human beings also part of the "natural" environment?' they ask. Representative of this position is the secular environmental ethicist William Cronon. In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (1996:35), Cronon points out that humans have been modifying nature for thousands of years. Therefore, it is difficult to speak of a 'non-human nature' that is untouched by, unspoiled by, or independent of human beings. Indeed, the very concept of nature is a human cultural construction that reflects human judgments and human values.

Most striking here are those who seek to highlight 'environmental racism' and inequities. They point out that academic discussions on environmental ethics as well as organizations for environmental activism fail to consider the concerns of the poor and of minority human communities (DiChiro 1996). Such communities are often as seriously affected by nuclear waste disposal and lack of clean water as are many of the animal species that environmentalists seek to protect. Yet, these human groups do not even register on what could be termed the environmentalists' radar screens.³ Thus,

² Though this category of 'biocentrism' comprises the distinct voices of biocentrists, ecocentrists, and deep ecologists, among others, I have found the term 'biocentrism' to convey their overall concern over against those of anthropocentrism. For more discussion on groupings of environmental ethical positions, see Pojman 1998. Furthermore, to these two categories, that of animal liberation can be added. For the purposes of clarity and brevity, I will primarily consider biocentric and anthropocentric thinkers in this paper.

the first strain of this alternative voice represents those who would broaden our understanding of 'nature,' seeking to include consideration of the human element and to promote a more equitable understanding of environmental ethics.

Then, there is another type of proponent for this 'alternative voice.' These do not so much seek to bring human beings back into the environmental discussion. Instead, they seek to give nature more weight than it has traditionally received, while maintaining the moral framework of anthropocentrism. They acknowledge that crude instrumental value, that is, evaluating nature solely based on its instrumental value for human beings, does not do justice to the web of relations we share. Nor is it even minimally adequate for correcting destructive human attitudes toward our overtaxed natural environment. Therefore, they meet our earlier mentioned authors in finding some balanced assessment of nature and humans. However, these thinkers caution that we not reject all talk of instrumental value and human distinctiveness. To jettison the uniqueness of human rationality or the importance of cooperative linguistically-based moral discourse would, they fear, have grave consequences to the fabric of our political communities. It would particularly weaken the moral basis for upholding human rights (Derr 1996; Dobel 1998). Therefore, this second approach to an 'alternative voice' seeks to find a more complex understanding of nature and the human person, yet one that maintains the unique value of human life.

Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology: a Three-termed Analysis

The themes mentioned above are being sounded among Christian thinkers and scholars of the Christian religion. However, Christian anthropology places weight on the spiritual aspect of human life. As a result, the playing field shifts to a large degree. A serious new advantage seems to be added to the stark anthropocentric position, leaving little room for the alternative voice we just examined.

This can be construed as follows. Secular anthropocentric thinkers often locate the distinctive value of humans in a characteristic that distinguishes

³ For example, Ramachandra Guha has noted the effect in the Indian subcontinent, when environmental ethics are based on an understanding of nature that excludes all human elements. Ironically, because human interests are often entirely excluded from the equation, wildlands preservation has benefited not only the tiger, the elephant, and the rhinoceros, but the wealthy segment of human society as well (Guha 1998:271).

them from animal life.⁴ Rationality holds the honored position here, following in the tradition of Descartes and Kant. Self-consciousness and the capacity for conceptual language are also added to the list by some (Peterson 2001). Now, with the emphasis on the spiritual, Christians add an even weightier item to the list. Christian theologians have long identified the eternal soul, the image of God, and the spiritual dimension of existence as the locus of our relationship to God. The religion scholar Anna Peterson explains, "The soul links humans' origins, capacities, and ultimate destiny to God and, thus, forever divides them from the 'nonspiritual' part of nature" (Peterson 2001:29).⁵ Thus, equipped with spirituality, the distinctive value of humans over animals, plants, or ecosystems acquires a religious sanction.

However, this conclusion does not present the whole picture. Along with the spiritual dimension of human life, Christianity also adds a new player to the mix. Human beings do not now relate only to each other, to animals, and to their natural environment. Now they find themselves in relationship to a God who makes claims on them as both the Creator of all nature, humans included, and their Redeemer. As a result, the spiritually-buttressed human distinctiveness mentioned above does not stand alone. It carries with it a reorientation of human life toward God. As a result of the Christian emphasis on relationship with God, we find in both Christian anthropocentric and biocentric thinking strong resonances of human subordination, dependence, responsibility, and gratitude.

The questions that I would like to raise are the following. 'In what manner can Protestant Christians contribute to the 'alternative voice' mentioned above?' 'Are there resources within the Protestant Christian tradition for a creative reframing of the relationship between humans and nature?' We have just now briefly mentioned the spiritual dimension to human identity and the reorientation toward God that Christianity as a whole brings to the table. Before looking to Calvin's theology as a resource for responding to these questions for the Protestant Christian community, I would first like to mention a group of thinkers who frame the alternative environmental positions mentioned earlier within a Christian framework.

⁴ Ecofeminist thinkers have further articulated the link between uniqueness and superiority, in a manner that holds parallels for human relations to nature (Warren 1990:125-146; Peterson 2001).

⁵ True, from early Christendom, the material creation has by no means been rejected as evil. Still, the spiritual life of the human being has long held a privileged position in Christian theology.

This grouping consists of Thomas Sieger Derr, Max L. Stackhouse, and Anna L. Peterson.

In *Environmental Ethics and Christian Humanism* (1996), Thomas Sieger Derr rejoins our earlier-mentioned theme of social equity concerns and their relationship to environmental ethics. According to Derr, the environmental movement has long sought to align itself alongside the advocates for social justice. Concern for the rights of nature seem to be a natural extension of concern for the rights of women and racial minorities. Derr accurately describes this sentiment, when he writes:

In theory it [the environmental movement] should have been perfect. Everyone is for life and health, clean air and pure water; how could there be any quarrel with a movement devoted to these ends? (Derr 1973/75: 7)

Yet, Derr cautions those who would look to nature as the primary locus of value. To so locate value in nature does not simply extend the secular call for rights and equality to nature. Nor does it simply add a new beneficiary to the Christian call to love one's neighbor, feed the poor, and aid the oppressed. Instead, a serious complication arises. If nature becomes the primary locus of value, then these values of respect for rights, equality, love, care and freedom from oppression come into question. It is not that nature is devoid of values that would be congruous with these. The harmonious balance and biodiversity of life observed in ecosystems cohere with such values. Yet, nature is also the realm of great violence, "of the food chain, of brute struggle, and painful death" (Derr 1996:27). As many secular environmental thinkers have put it, it is the world of 'tooth and claw.'

If nature provides such a plurality of different ethical values, how then are we to choose from among them? According to Derr, it is essential to acknowledge that we start with values from outside of nature. Foremost among Derr's concerns is to preserve our basis for upholding both human rights and respect for individual human beings. To preserve our basis for such social justice concerns, he maintains, one must look to a value outside of nature to guide our reading of nature. For Christians, this does not mean primarily looking to human nature or to our national citizenship. "Theologically, we guarantee human rights," explains Derr, "...by the radical equality of the love of God, the concept of an 'alien dignity,' and a grace bestowed on us which does not belong to our humanness as such (Derr 1996:30)."

In *Public Theology and Political Economy* (1991), Max L. Stackhouse similarly notes that Christianity, unlike religions that view nature as sacred, views God as creator of, yet distinct from, the natural world. Because nature is a subordinate reality to God, nature is not the absolute or even basic guide to our existence. The standards of the Creator, not the creation, serve as guide in our attitude toward the gift of nature. Thus, Derr and Stackhouse help to begin our conversation between Protestant Christianity and environmental ethics.

To briefly summarize our discussion thus far, Christianity introduces a spiritual element to human identity. However, it does not follow from this that human beings automatically receive greater value, thus one-sidedly buttressing the position of anthropocentrists. Rather, in keeping with the spirit of the alternative voices we have heard thus far, complexity is added to the categories of nature and the human. That is, the spiritual element of human life carries with it a reorientation toward God. As Derr and Stackhouse point out, such a reorientation allows the possibility of looking to God for standards of value rather than to the subordinate and morally ambiguous world of nature. As a result, the basis for human rights, human compassion, and social justice concerns is maintained.

Max Stackhouse captures this distinctive Christian contribution to environmental ethics, when he describes it in terms of a 'three term analysis.' The discussion expands from that of nature and the human, a two-termed analysis, to that of (1) creation, partially distorted in the 'fall,' (2) humans, who are called to repair and improve creation, and (3) God, whose relationship to us as Creator and Redeemer provides us with privileges as well as standards and responsibilities.

TWO BRIEF COMMENTS ON METHOD

Now, at this point in my study, I would like to make two points related to method. This will provide a transition to our examination of Calvin's theology. First, for a method in the bridging of disciplines that this study involves, I draw on the work of Selya Benhabib (1992) and Wentzel vanHuyssteen (1999). Furthermore, in attempting to bring into conversation not only distinct disciplines but disciplines that span distinct time periods, I draw further on the work of Jean Porter (1990) and Ellen T. Charry

(1997).⁶ Though it is not possible, in this relatively short paper, to address the content of these authors' work in detail, I will make the following observation regarding the work of Benhabib and vanHuyssteen.

Both these authors highlight the possibility and profitability of dialogue, even when consensus is unlikely and worldviews diverge sharply. Once one thinks beyond the goal of consensus, one can allow for an *ongoing interaction* that takes on a life of its own, so to speak, allowing the richness of each field's thinking to be brought into contact, each party's questions to be challenged by the others, and subtle patterns to emerge. Applied in this study, the problems faced by environmental ethics are brought into contact with John Calvin's 16th Century work. Though Calvin certainly did not address the same concerns, and though he held differing assumptions, this contact may provide for creative and challenging avenues not otherwise apparent to environmental thinkers.

My second comment on method is the following: Since my emphasis will soon fall more on the human person than on nature directly, I would like to mention the work of Anna L. Peterson. Her work provides support for my study's assumption that human nature and environmental ethics stand in close interconnection. It also begins to fill out in greater detail the character of this 'three-termed analysis' mentioned earlier.

In *Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and Our Place in the World* (2001), Anna L. Peterson underlines the connection between human nature and nonhuman nature. Joining the secular environmental ethicist J. Baird Callicott, Peterson contends that our understanding of human selfhood shapes our attitude toward nature. Anthropology stands in close relation to environmental ethics.

Peterson lays the groundwork for her argument by illustrating how assumptions about human nature shape our economic and political arrangements. For example, looking at political liberalism, Peterson explains that social contract theory rests on a conviction that people are rational, autonomous, and self-interested. Its moral claims, such as the emphasis on rights to freedom from interference, make sense only in light of this anthropology. Indeed, with an individualistic view of human nature, such rights seem not only 'good,' but also 'natural.' Anthropology thus has a strong bearing on economic and political ethics.

⁶ Ellen T. Charry (1997) provides a particularly interesting "aretegenic" approach to premodern theologians.

Peterson now applies this thesis to environmental ethics. Those practices and lifestyles that affect the natural environment, Peterson claims, also rest on assumptions about human nature. Along with the ethicist J. Baird Callicott, Peterson makes the following claim: We cannot begin to resolve ecological crises without transforming our thinking about what it means to be human.⁷

For example, Peterson holds that the anthropology stemming from the apostle Paul, and continuing into Protestant Christianity through Luther, provides highly ambiguous ethical implications for our treatment of nature. According to Peterson's interpretation, Paul adopts an anthropological framework that Peterson calls "in but not of" the world" (Peterson 2001:32).⁸ More specifically, Peterson underscores that, for the apostle Paul, redemption involves the creation of a 'new man.' This means that the old creation, whether human body or the material world, is not the Christian's true home. He or she is encouraged to look beyond it to the new creation. The concept of a new creation, in Peterson's interpretation, thus gives only impermanent, marginal value to nature. The old creation is being replaced and therefore bears no ultimate significance.

In summary, Peterson contends that, in looking at human nature, we find there a significant factor of our attitude towards nature as a whole. Our anthropologies thus do not necessarily oppose or compete with, but rather, meaningfully inform our environmental ethics. I now draw on Peterson's insights as I examine Calvin's view of the redeemed human person as a conversation partner for environmental ethics, finding here new possibilities both to nuance Peterson's interpretation of Pauline and Protestant Christianity and to supplement Derr and Stackhouse's earlier-mentioned contributions to this conversation.

⁷Peterson draws on Callicott 1994. She further draws on the work of Max Oelschlaeger (1994), who has identified utilitarian individualism as contributing to the destructive treatment of the natural environment.

⁸For a similar assessment of the Christian tradition, though conceived according to different categories, see H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985). This work involves a closer, more historically-sensitive examination of a number of Christian theologians including, Augustine and Luther.

A PROPHETIC VOICE: JOHN CALVIN'S THEOLOGY

The thesis that this final section of paper will test is that Protestant theology, particularly in the Reformed tradition, contains resources for a 'theologically anthropocentric environmental ethic' that does maintain the serious moral considerability of nature. Yet, surprisingly, the core of such an environmental ethic is not primarily a strong valuation of nature. The core of this ethic is *a view of the human self that is reoriented to God* and, by consequence, reoriented towards human communities and the natural world. In what follows, we will examine the character of this reorientation more closely.

Nature and the Human Person:

Susan Schreiner's 1991 Study and Calvin's 1559 *Institutes*

In what follows, I will first take a look at the work of the Calvin scholar Susan Schreiner, in relation to some of my own observations on Calvin's 1559 *Institutes*. After this, I will turn our attention to one of Calvin's biblical commentaries.

In her 1991 work, *The Theater of His Glory*, Susan Schreiner makes a significant and sorely needed contribution to our understanding of Calvin and nature. Most significant for our purposes are the two following observations, one relating to the natural world and one to the redeemed human person.

First, in Schreiner's interpretation of Calvin, the natural world that God has created remains in existence despite the fall of humanity into sin. Though sin certainly carries distorting effects for all of creation, it does not annihilate the natural realm. Calvin's view of nature at its basic level recognizes the continued existence of nature. Even more interesting than the fact of this continued existence, however, is the manner in which Calvin characterizes it. Though affirming the continued integrity of the natural world, Calvin sought to avoid giving nature too great an independence from God. This is most visible when Calvin underscores nature's need for God. Already inherently fragile at the creation, the nature of the cosmos became positively threatened with the fall. The danger of disorder, chaos, and collapse, so vivid in Calvin's view of cosmology and history, shaped his view of providence into one in which God powerfully restrains and stabilizes the created order. Therefore, Schreiner presents a picture of nature as continu-

ing to exist with an integrity of its own, though with a deepened dependence on God for the preservation of its order.

Second, not only does Calvin affirm the continuation of nature, Calvin also affirms the continuation of *human* nature. Now, this often elicits surprise. Is Calvin not the theologian who most ardently spoke of the total depravity of human nature and the need for Christians to deny this human self? Nevertheless, Schreiner keenly observes that, not only the human body, but human reason and the human will as well, continue to exist in us, even after our fall into sin.

Most interesting for the subject of my study, Schreiner extends her examination of human nature into the spiritual realm, that is, into the redemptive transformation of the human person. In this area, Schreiner underscores Calvin's belief that, throughout the process of sanctification, everything primal to human nature remains in existence. That is, "the primary nature created by God remains, is reclaimed, purified and transformed."

Schreiner articulates the character of this continuity in a manner that richly portrays the role of the human capacities to will and to reason. However, in her efforts to underscore the continuation of human nature in the process of renewal, Schreiner often speaks of the human person in terms that suggest a certain independence from and a degree of opposition to God's involvement. Though Schreiner does mention divine involvement in the Christian person's sanctification, at the end of her chapter on "Creation Set Free," the reader is left with a portrait of sanctification that can be described as follows.

Though God indeed must provide the impetus for human renewal, and though, once begun, this process continues to involve God in a number of ways, the natural human faculties are not for this reason relegated to a merely passive role in the process of Christian renewal. On the contrary, natural human faculties persist and do so actively in the Christian life. The natural, redirected will strives toward the goal of perfection. The renewed mind gradually perceives both God's benevolence and the order and beauty present in nature.⁹

⁹For example, Schreiner writes: "But this purity is attained only gradually; holiness is actively and daily pursued by the continual striving of the redirected human will... The ideas of 'growth,' 'struggle,' 'combat,' and 'striving' governed Calvin's view of the spiritual life" (Schreiner 1991:103).

Such a portrayal does not contradict Calvin entirely. A number of passages do in fact provide solid support for Schreiner's portrayal. However, at this point, I would like to suggest an observation that differs in a subtle but significant way from Schreiner's own insight that nature somehow continues and functions positively even in redemption. This observation is the following: Schreiner's portrayal seems to insufficiently emphasize and integrate a crucial aspect of Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life. Christian renewal, for Calvin, involves a deep dependence on God at every level of the process. Recognition of one's need for the intervention of God's Spirit colors every aspect of this process.

In other words, after laying her emphasis on the active continuation of human nature, Schreiner does not proceed to strongly qualify this focus in light of human poverty and dependence on God. This is particularly surprising in light of her earlier-mentioned analysis of the integrity of the natural order. There, Schreiner demonstrated the continued existence of the natural world as a whole, including throughout a strong effort to qualify the integrity of nature with nature's precarious condition. Nature, she explained, stands in continual need for God's preserving and renewing activity. Surprisingly, one finds such concerns relegated to the background in Schreiner's treatment of human nature and human renewal.¹⁰

My contention is that Calvin's portrayal of human renewal bears far greater resemblance to Schreiner's earlier portrayal of the natural order than Schreiner herself allows. This can be particularly seen in Book II of Calvin's 1559 *Institutes*. I would like to highlight two quotations that demonstrate Calvin's overriding concern that the regenerated human person lives in deep dependence upon God.

In a passage where the continuity of human nature is clearly at hand, Calvin reflects on the implications of the possessive pronoun "our." To set the context for this quotation, Calvin has been speaking of good works. Good works, he explains, are often said to be "ours" in Scripture and common parlance. Calvin suggests the following:

What does the possessive pronoun "ours" signify to them but that what is otherwise by no means due to us *becomes ours by God's loving-kindness* and free gift? (*Institutes* II.5.14)

¹⁰ This is even more surprising given that Schreiner characterizes both nature and the human in terms of order. Referring to the work of Ronald S. Wallace and Lucien Joseph Richard, Schreiner depicts this sanctification of the human person as the gradual restoration of order.

Schreiner's question, and our own question, regarding the continuity of the old nature and the new nature are recast here. Rather than ask simply whether 'what was once ours' still remains 'ours' when we are redeemed, Calvin would have us simultaneously ask 'who is the One who has given us what is now ours?'

In these early chapters of Book II, we find Calvin referring extensively to a biblical passage from the Gospel of John that shows a similar concern. In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Calvin gives a detailed analysis of the parable of the vine and branches, as follows:

If we no more bear fruit of ourselves than a branch buds out when it is plucked from the earth and deprived of moisture, *we ought not to seek any further the potentiality of our nature for good*. Nor is this conclusion doubtful: "Apart from me you can do nothing" [John 15:5]. He does not say that we are too weak to be sufficient unto ourselves, but in reducing us to nothing he excludes all estimation of even the slightest ability. *Engrafted in Christ* we bear fruit like a vine ... Now Christ simply means that we are dry and worthless wood *when we are separated from him*, for apart from him we have no ability to do good (*Institutes* II.3.9).

The theme of reliance on God, mentioned earlier, stands out clearly in this quotation. In fact, Calvin's concern seems to be less between nature and the redeemed condition. The more important concern for Calvin seems to be discontinuity between self-reliance and reliance on God. Thus, in the last step of our analysis of Calvin, I would like to fill out my snapshot of the redeemed human person by turning our attention to Calvin's commentary on the Gospel of John.

Calvin's Commentary on the Gospel of John

In recent years, Calvin scholars have begun to devote greater attention to Calvin's commentaries. Scholars such as Barbara Pitkin (1999), Elsie Anne McKee (1989), and Richard Muller (2000) have observed that studies on the commentaries help to give a fuller picture of Calvin's theology, showing areas of Calvin's thought guided largely by the concerns of the biblical text, concerns that Calvin may not have chosen to address in his more polemically and 'locus' guided *Institutes*. In fact, given Calvin's own explicit intention that the *Institutes* be used as an aid to the reading of Scriptures, it seems both appropriate and important that we look at Calvin's commentaries in shaping our understanding of his theology. In what follows, I will examine

one passage from the commentary on the Gospel of John, chosen with reference to the biblical passage just quoted above. While consideration of the full commentary at hand and of Calvin's historical context would be methodologically more rigorous, the length of this study will require that I defer such examinations to my upcoming lengthier study on this subject. This paper can thus be considered a preliminary exploration.

In turning to Calvin's commentary, *The Gospel According to St. John*, published in 1553, six years before the final edition of the *Institutes*, I draw our attention to the passage of John 15:1-21. This includes the passage quoted above, along with some textual context that addresses similar themes and phrases. The main passage concerns the extended metaphor in which Christ describes himself as the vine, the Father as the 'husbandman,' and believers as the branches.

Three observations stand out in our analysis of Calvin's comments here. First, the dominant theme in this passage bears close resemblance to the theme of reliance on God mentioned in our earlier analysis of the 1559 *Institutes*. Calvin describes the main point of the vine metaphor as follows: "The heart of the comparison," he writes, "is that by nature we are barren and dry save in so far as we have been engrafted into Christ, and draw new and extraneous power from Him."¹¹

Now, Calvin focuses much attention on the connection between the branch and the vine, that is, on the believer's connection to Christ. He uses a number of verbs to express this idea: "engrafted," "implanted," "planted in," "take root," "joined." In almost all these uses, the main idea expressed is that we can bear no good fruit, do nothing pleasing to God, or follow what Christ commands of us, unless we are 'in Him' in these ways. Calvin thus expresses ideas similar to those observed in our analysis of the *Institutes*. However, beyond this observation of the congruity between this commentary passage and the *Institutes*, we cannot make significant conclusions regarding the strength of these ideas in Calvin's overall thought. This is due to the likelihood that, in his commentaries, Calvin followed the themes provided by biblical text rather than those of particular interest to him.

Nevertheless, the commentaries give us an opportunity to see how Calvin characterizes and elaborates on this theme of 'reliance on God' or 'being engrafted in Christ.' For our second point, then, we turn to this characterization. Most interesting here is Calvin's repeated use of the terms 'continu-

¹¹All of the following quotations are taken from Calvin 1959:93-196.

ance,' 'continual,' and 'continually.' These terms appear already five times in the first four pages: "believers need continual cultivating," "they produce nothing good unless God is continually at work," "that...they may learn how necessary is the continuance of grace," and "that they may be the more stirred to meditate on it continually." Most notable is the following passage, "For, just as the commencement of strength comes from Him, so also its uninterrupted continuance." The connection between the believer and Christ is thus portrayed as having an ongoing character. The Christian life takes on a dynamic of persistent connection to Christ. The believer must be continually engrafted, planted, or rooted in Christ.

However, given that this horticultural metaphor leaves much to wonder about regarding the rational, emotional, volitional aspects of human life, we are led to ask what more this commentary passage can tell us about the character of the Christian life.¹² What is it that Christians are called to do or receive continually? The portions of the commentary including the vine metaphor as well as those just following give us a number of clues. Here, Calvin refers more concretely to prayer, trust, mutual love, and patience. However, the references to prayer are the most salient and most closely connected explicitly with 'reliance or dependence on God.' For example, Calvin writes, "[W]hen Christ here exhorts us to perseverance, we must not rely on our own efforts and activity, but pray to Him who commands us, to confirm us in His love." Again, a few pages later, Calvin echoes this, "And, indeed, the fact that most of the teachers either droop through laziness or are utterly defeated through despair happens simply because they are sluggish in their duty of prayer." Thus, Calvin's characterization of the Christian life in terms of 'being continually engrafted in Christ' may be closely related to the practice of prayer.

Our third and final point is that Calvin expresses little interest in the continuity between unredeemed human nature, on the one hand, and redeemed human nature, on the other. When he does attend to this theme in this commentary passage, one could almost say that Calvin expresses complete discontinuity between the two. For example, Calvin writes, "...man's nature is unfruitful and destitute of all good. For no man has the nature of the vine until he is implanted in Him." A little later, and more starkly, Calvin continues, "Christ is not concerned with what the branch has by nature

¹² I would like to recognize Bruce L. McCormack's influence in my asking of this question.

before it is joined to the vine, but means rather that we begin to become branches when we are united to Him. Indeed, Scripture shows that we are useless and dry wood before we are in Him.”

However, I hesitate to conclude from this that Calvin holds a view that unredeemed human nature stands in discontinuity from redeemed human nature. This is due to Schreiner’s own observations to the contrary in others of Calvin’s texts, Calvin’s tendency to write in a manner that seeks not only to accurately describe but also to persuade, and Calvin’s explicit desire in this commentary to refute the Roman Catholic position in which human nature holds some capacity to contribute to salvation. Nevertheless, with no hesitation, I draw from these and our other two observations the following conclusion: Though this biblical passage from the Gospel of John afforded Calvin with ample opportunity to elaborate on the continuity in human nature and redeemed human nature, Calvin highlighted the passage’s theme of self-reliance far more than this continuity. Amidst the view that Calvin upholds the continuity between original human nature and redeemed human nature, one must give heavy weight to the believer’s continual reliance on God, one that Calvin characterizes in terms of engrafting into Christ and that may take concrete form in a life of persistent prayer.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a number of environmental ethicists and Protestant theologians have drawn on pre-modern Christian theologies in order both to assess past Christian attitudes towards nature and offer resources to shape contemporary attitudes. Were theorists, theologians, as well as church communities to draw on Susan Schreiner’s analysis of Calvin, they would find numerous resources for a positive valuation of nature.

The following two stand out. First, the continuing existence and integrity of nature would challenge them to not dismiss nature as if it were destroyed by sin. Yet, their acknowledgement of nature’s integrity would not translate into an independent natural realm that could act as a moral guide.

Second, the continued active involvement of human nature in both our earthly, civil lives and in the Christian life of renewal would lend additional value to nature. Drawing upon the work of Anna Peterson on anthropology and environmental ethics, we can suggest that such a positive religious teaching on human nature in the Christian’s spiritual life lends itself to an equally

positive attitude towards the natural world. This stands in particular contrast to a prevalent view among environmental thinkers that the Protestant Christian spiritual life is rooted in a completely new nature or new creation, one that is understood primarily in opposition to an old, fallen nature. While in this latter conception of the Christian spiritual life, all that relates to the spiritual separates us from the rest of nature, Schreiner's emphasis on a continuous human nature connects this spiritual life back to creation and nature.

However, if, as my study suggests, the continued active involvement of human nature in the Christian life were strongly qualified, if human need for God's presence were brightly highlighted, then the value given to nature would take on a subtle but significantly different character. Fragility and dependence would characterize both the nonhuman natural world and human beings. As a result, nonhuman and human nature would receive comparable qualified valuations, a substantial corrective to arrogant and egocentric tendencies in anthropocentric environmental ethics. Both human nature and the larger world of nature would be valued as a good creation and qualified as precarious, continually on the verge of chaos or sin.

Furthermore, the particularly positively-valued spiritual dimension of human life would lose much of its traditional power to separate human beings from nature. Human spiritual uniqueness would bind us to God based on no human capacity or possession. Our link to God would be based not on a possession unique to humans, but on a relationship, a relationship based on dependence and continuously maintained by grace.

Therefore, Calvin's view of nature and the human does indeed provide resources for prophetically shaping an environmental ethic, one that can be summarized as follows: A view of the human person that recognizes unique human spiritual life, without lending this uniqueness an unqualified value and independent status of its own. A Calvin-based environmental ethic is a generous ethic, one focused not on human self, human need, and human desire, but on God, and through God, on others, both human and natural.

In decisions in which the needs of humans come into conflict with those of nature, such as in the creation of a protected forest preserve in an area that would otherwise provide much-needed logging jobs, the unique relationship between God and humans may indeed lead us to favor the economic interests of the human community, particularly those of disadvantaged human communities. This places us within the positions that 'anthropocentric' ethicists would take. However, before our readers throw their hands up in frustration that Christianity once again gives little value to non-

human nature, let me point out the following. Our observations in this study would strongly limit the extent to which we could focus on these human concerns. Our favoring of human economic concerns would not be done in a stark, one-sided manner. Rather, our observations in this study would lead us to consider God's intentions for the whole of creation and to strive for a balanced ethic in which the forest ecosystem is respectfully and perhaps sustainably used for such human economic wellbeing.

Even more importantly, our study provides not only a framework for such an economic calculus, but a deep-seated *motivation* to engage in natural conservation, one lodged in our very understanding of our humanity before God. And finally, this self-understanding can contribute to a deeper theoretical analysis, one in which we critically evaluate the core philosophies that shape our economic practices and attempt to discern whether they are congruent with our theological anthropology. In keeping with Walter Brueggeman's portrait of prophetic ministry, then, as we engage the concerns of our contemporary world, we allow alternative views of nature and the human to capture our imaginations and begin to give concrete shape to our future, even if this must happen in halting efforts amidst the ambiguities, frustrations, and difficulties of the present.

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Understanding Richard Shaull's *Third Conversion*: Encountering Pentecostalism among the Poor

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For a short time I had the honor of working with the late M. Richard Shaull, the Henry Winters Luce Professor Emeritus of Ecumenics at Princeton Theological Seminary. He gladly agreed to be a part of my doctoral dissertation committee. Despite the fact that he was already facing the limitations imposed by the illness that would eventually take his life, the energy and alertness of his mind were impressive. After reading several texts that he wrote in the last years of his life, and comparing them with some of his earlier writings, I was convinced that by the time of his death Dr. Shaull's theological reflections were still fresh, and that he was still able to make a significant turn in his thinking in order to capture the new things that God is doing in these times. Shaull never allowed his theology to be crystallized into a final format. At the age of 82, he was still open to the future. He kept himself open to new transformations because he believed that God is always doing something new in the world. For him, theologians, like prophets, must be always open to the new irruptions of the Spirit of God into human life and history. God is always coming to us *from the future*.

In this essay, I want to point out the significance of three important *turns* in Shaull's life, each of which profoundly marked his thought and spirituality. In his latest writings Shaull referred to these turns as *conversions* or *spiritual transformations* that deepened his faith. These spiritual conversions, instead of signifying radical transformations of his convictions, were rather *transforming encounters* that reaffirmed and even radicalized Shaull's basic faith tenets and convictions. I will pay special attention to his encounter with Pentecostalism, a turn that he called "the third conversion"¹ This en-

¹He also uses this term as title for a short article written for *The Other Side* (Shaull 1997:32-34).

counter has often been overlooked in assessments of Shaull's theological legacy. In fact, he used the term *third conversion* to speak not only of the impact upon his *own* faith of his encounter with the poor Pentecostals in Rio's shantytowns—that is, its impact in terms of his own personal experience of spiritual transformation—but also as a term pointing to current *global* experiences of transformation taking place in worldwide Christianity. After referring to the Latin American base communities in the eighties as a “second Reformation” (Shaull 1984), in the second half of the 1990's Shaull became convinced the Christian movement was now undergoing a third conversion as it was beginning to incorporate the experiences of global Pentecostalism. For him, the encounter of older churches with Pentecostalism had the potential of presenting possible alternative futures to the Church as a whole.

I will focus upon these three experiences which Shaull interpreted as *conversions*. After briefly describing the two first conversions, I will discuss Shaull's *third conversion*, showing its significance for other Christians who, like Shaull, have undergone the *second conversion* by meeting the poor of the world.² Unlike many other analysts of the Pentecostal movement, who see it as a substitute for a liberationist movement that has failed to achieve its goals, Shaull saw the encounter with Pentecostalism as an opportunity to radicalize some of the claims of liberation theology, especially those concerning the privileged hermeneutical standpoint of the poor. Therefore, as I will show later, Shaull's ‘third conversion’ has its full meaning only for those who have first been affected by the ‘second conversion’.

SHAULL'S FIRST CONVERSION

Although Shaull never offered many details about what should be called *the first conversion*, it is logical to assume that Shaull was referring to his first encounter with God, as well as with the Protestant faith. As Reynaldo Ferreira Leão Neto (1995:104) affirms, Shaull never, throughout his life, ceased being a Protestant, in the full sense of the word. His life was profoundly marked from beginning to end by a strong belief in the sovereignty of a God who is

²Since Shaull did not offer a theological definition of conversion, I won't spend time elaborating any possible meaning for this word. I will use the term *conversion* here as simply meaning a profound spiritual transformation that one experiences as a result of their encounter with the Divine, which manifests God's Self in our human encounters with people and situations.

the only absolute, and who judges all other circumstances of life—religious, social, political, ecclesiastical, and ideological, for example—which become relative before this Absolute. Following what Paul Tillich named as the Protestant principle, Shaull believed that because God is sovereign, everything else should be submitted to critique and protest, including the Protestant church itself. It is possible, then, to understand all the experiences that contributed to the development of this Protestant aspect of Shaull's theology as constituents of his *first conversion*.

From the time of his youth, Shaull lived a religious life in which each experience and each encounter with new realities were understood as encounters with God. By reading Shaull's memoirs,³ one can clearly see that his autobiographical testimony attests to the fact that his faith was developed through several significant encounters. Shaull's encounter with his parents' Calvinism gave him the initial basis for the cultivation of a faith in the sovereignty of God, mentioned above. His own encounter with the Bible, in the beginning of his adolescence, produced in him a deep understanding of Jesus' radical call to discipleship — that is, Jesus' teachings which contrasted a life of love with a self-centered life characterized by greed and egoism. Shaull's encounter with some material deprivation in his childhood opened his eyes to the reality of poverty in the world, and challenged him to give his whole life in an attempt to transform the structures that create social injustice. His college encounter with the Brethren and the Mennonites taught him about the importance of conceiving the church as a community rather than as an institution. Also during these years, Shaull was also influenced by the study of sociology, which would help him later to deal with the economic, political and social structures of life.

At the age of 18, as a student at Princeton Theological Seminary, Shaull's Protestant faith was significantly transformed and deepened as he encountered three thinkers whose life and work would become profoundly influential to him, namely John Mackay—the President of the Seminary and a former missionary to Latin America— Emil Brunner, and Josef Hromadka. From Mackay, Shaull learned that his intellectual and spiritual journeys

³ The full text of Richard Shaull's memoirs is going to be published in Portuguese in November 2003 under the title *Surpreendido Pela Graça*, which means Surprised by God's Grace. (Shaull 2003) All the quotes and references to this text here come from the unpublished manuscript to which I had access. The page numbers used here, then, will not correspond to the published version. All translations from this manuscript are mine.

could not exist apart from each other. In his memoirs, Shaull (2003:21) affirms that every biblical and theological principle taught by John Mackay was corroborated by his personal faith and life experience. Mackay also helped him to understand that the nature of Christian faith is such that it inevitably leads to action.

His encounter with the already-famous Swiss theologian Emil Brunner enabled Shaull to re-elaborate the Reformed faith of his youth, rather than give it up, when faced with new intellectual challenges. Brunner helped him to find a balanced alternative between fundamentalism and liberalism. Furthermore, Brunner's theology reinforced Shaull's conviction that the supreme reality at the heart of the universe is the Grace of God, .i.e., God's presence and activity in the midst of human life and history. (Shaull 2003:19)

But no one was more influential to him during this time than Czech theologian Josef Hromadka. Hromadka's theology offered Shaull the tools he needed to understand the crisis of Western civilization as well as to engage, theologically, the emergent philosophical and social forces of the time. However, the most profound mark of Hromadka's influence upon Shaull can be seen in his understanding of the central place of eschatology in Biblical and theological thought. According to Shaull, Hromadka taught him that "we can better understand the struggles of life in the tension with 'what is going to be.' We can act more responsibly in the world when guided by a vision of the things that can most contribute to its future transformation." (Shaull 2003:20) This eschatological emphasis became one of the primary marks of Shaull's theology and thinking throughout his life. Because of this emphasis, some people referred to Shaull as "the prophet of the future." (Leão Neto 1995:106) Rubem Alves, one of Shaull's most famous pupils, wrote the following words, as he remembered Shaull soon after his death:

Prophets are not like clairvoyants who announce the future that is going to happen. Prophets are like poets, who picture the future that may happen. Prophets suggest a road. Richard Shaull spoke of futures that we had never dreamed of. He was able to see what no one else was seeing at that time. (Alves 2002:1) [translation is mine]

It is important to notice that towards the end of his life Shaull continued to see the Gospel of Jesus Christ as "the good news of tomorrow" (Shaull 1989:150). It was this feature of his theology that made it sound subversive and dangerous for many. As Alves affirms, Shaull challenged all of our certainties and prohibitions.

The centrality of eschatology in Shaull's thought was deepened even more by the theological language he later acquired as he interacted with Paul Lehmann, under whom he studied between 1950 and 1952. Shaull affirmed that Lehmann helped him understand that the neo-orthodox theology that he learned at seminary could become a powerful tool to analyze social changes that were happening — and to participate in these changes. "For him, the Bible offers a messianic vision of a world in transformation. Therefore, theology must be done vis-à-vis the coming of God's Kingdom" (Shaull 1985: 188). In an open letter written to Lehmann, Richard Shaull and Barbara Hall say:

Especially in the Brazilian context, but not only there, your eschatological perspective helped us to look for order and synthesis on the other side of change and confusion. It was possible for us to search without fear or defensiveness for opportunities to witness and contribute something positive in a highly uncertain situation, because we believe with you that God was taking us somewhere. We were able to accept risks, make mistakes, and above all sit loose in the chaotic state of things primarily because the eschatological dimension of faith was opened up to us by you. (Shaull & Hall 1972:88)

Thus, under Lehmann's influence, Shaull began to see the church as that *koinonia* in the world where Christ is being formed. Lehmann was able to show him that this *koinonia* is the main locus of the apostolic-prophetic witness as well as the creative reality of Christ's presence in the world. In his experience as a missionary in Colombia, and later in Brazil, Shaull often did not find this apostolic-prophetic witness in the *ecclesia*. So he began to look for other kinds of worldly *koinonias* where Christ was also being formed. He found them in the Brazilian students movement, in the labor movements, and in other social movements that he identified with "the church in the modern Diaspora" (Shaull 1964:3ff.).

THE SECOND CONVERSION

Shaull's "second conversion" was related to this awakening to the nature of the church as existing in what he called the modern Diaspora. In 1942, when he first arrived in Colombia, Shaull had his first dramatic encounter with extreme poverty and oppression. On his first night in Colombia, as he walked

to the hotel, he passed by numerous children sleeping on the streets who were using old newspapers to protect themselves from the cold of the night. Months later he realized that a young presbyter, who was one of his assistants in Barranquilla, was dying from tuberculosis because he had had to choose between buying food for his children or medication to cure his disease. This was a dramatic experience and began an encounter with poverty and deprivation that affected the rest of his life. By becoming fully immersed in the Latin American reality, Shaull could get a close-up view of the people's suffering — suffering which was the result of social injustice and exploitation. In his encounter with that reality his ears were open anew to the Scriptures' passionate cry for justice. Shaull referred to this encounter as a "second conversion," which he described as a "conversion to solidarity with the poor" (Shaull 1997:32). This conversion transformed his theology. It prompted him to pay special attention to this context of injustice and oppression in which he was now immersed, leading to a deepening and reinterpretation of some of the things he had learned in his prior encounters.

Although the time Shaull spent in Colombia was very significant, it was during his encounter with the Brazilian students in the 1950's that he was able to play the role not only of a prophet, but also of a theologian who would become influential to an entire generation of young Brazilian thinkers. During this period Shaull became the main organic intellectual of a Protestant movement of a progressive and ecumenical character, which was being formed among young university students and seminarians, primarily. This movement flourished until it was harshly suppressed in the early 1960's by both the military and by conservative elements within the Protestant churches. In these groups of students Shaull envisioned a new form for Christian communities operating along a new frontier—the frontier of social transformation. With his eyes turned to the future, Shaull understood that as the Christian Student Movement developed alternative *koinonias* in Brazil, it risked the possibility of becoming the "church of tomorrow" (Shaull 2003:146).

Despite the influence of this movement upon others that came later—including the base community movement and the development of liberation theology—some of its potentials and facets were never fully developed. Shaull and his pupils did not have the time nor the means, for instance, to fully develop a social ethic that could function as a Christian testimony in the midst of the struggle for social change. There were times of frustration, but Shaull was never discouraged. Believing that God was taking him some-

where, he expanded his field of action by creating interactions and developing new dialogues among diverse groups, such as the Brazilian intelligentsia, Marxist activists, and Dominican priests. His theology of social change, thus, was now being developed in dialogue with Christians and non-Christians, because of his early belief that Christians are called to follow God's actions in the frontiers of social change. (Schaull 2003:122ff.) His Reformed heritage, nevertheless, enabled him to be critical in his interaction with all these movements and ideologies. He emphasized the need for a constant dialogue between theology and political ideologies, but never desired a full integration between the two.

A good example of this position can be seen in the way Schaull used the term *revolution*, a key-word in his theology. Schaull used this word as a theological category—not an ideological one—understanding it in light of his eschatological emphasis as well as in the light of the radical transcendence of God, an emphasis which characterized his entire thought. By using the word 'revolution' within this theological framework, he found a common theme that facilitated the connection of the Christian faith to the historical situation that Christians were experiencing in the particular context of the struggle for structural transformation in Latin America. In this way Christians could get involved with secular movements struggling for social change, offering some contribution on their own terms, instead of passively accepting the original logic and orientation of Marxist ideologies and strategies. (Schaull, 2003:132ff) By conceiving of political involvement along these lines, Schaull affirms, "we did not have to lose our Christian identity, nor had we to accept their plans for action; we were rather forced to deepen our knowledge and develop a more critical perception of what we were doing" (2003:178).

In that effervescent period in Brazilian history, Schaull cleared the path that would be broadened and further developed by liberation theology. His contributions to Latin American theology can be perceived as daring anticipations of themes that would not become central to the agenda of the field of theology until many years later. Because of his constant emphasis on the eschatological burst of God's kingdom and action into our lives and history, Schaull viewed the nature of theology as being a "kind of dynamic thought in permanent process of re-creation, looking for a response to the God who comes to us from the future" (2003:193). This vision kept him open-minded throughout his life to the creative action of the Holy Spirit in human history. As the ecclesiastical structures seemed to not be able to move as

fast as was needed, Shaull started to affirm that the Church was in need of experiencing *resurrection*, and that would happen in the form of *Diaspora*. Pressed by the plots against him in the most conservative sectors of the Brazilian Presbyterian church, Shaull was forced to return to the U.S. in 1962. He took a position at Princeton Theological Seminary, and was prohibited by the new U.S.-backed right-wing military government in Brazil from returning to that country for twenty years. So, only in the 1980's did Shaull have his first encounter with the Latin American base communities, which had spread throughout the continent during the two previous decades. He understood those new communities that flourished out of liberation theology to be a new reformation taking place in the Church — as a new theology giving birth to a new church. (Shaull, 1984:119) Shaull described his encounter with these poor base communities as a *second conversion*. In a response to Latin American liberation theology he wrote:

I cannot escape the fact that the theology I am examining confronts *me* and calls *me* into question. Because of its message, I have been compelled to read the Bible in a new way and hear a word I had not heard before. My eyes have been opened to see new dimensions of the Gospel message about God's concern for the poor and Christ's proclamation of the advent of a kingdom in which the poor and marginal will have a new life and a special place. My relationship with God has been enriched and transformed, and I have been forced to hear a new call to obedience. (Shaull, 1989b:148)

On another occasion Shaull referred to the base communities as a new expression of the Protestant Reformation's motto, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. He further affirmed that his Calvinist heritage led him "to believe that the church, in order to be faithful to this calling, must always be open to renewal and willing to respond time and again, in new ways, to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in new historical situations" (Shaull 1991:201). Therefore, for Shaull, the church is being called over and over again to read the signs of the times. From his first encounter with the Latin American poor, in the 1940's and 1950's, to his encounter with the poor base communities in the 1980's, Shaull experienced a progressive conversion to the poor. He moved from a solidarity with the poor, in the 1940's, to a continuous struggle for social justice in the years that followed, to a realization regarding the hermeneutical privilege of the poor—which became mature in the 1970's and 1980's—that made him believe that the poor were the main theological

actors to whom the professional theologians should listen. With this background in mind one can better grasp his view of what he called "the third conversion."

SHAULL'S THIRD CONVERSION

While the emphases that characterize Shaull's first two 'conversions' are better known, the later experiences that coalesced in what he called the 'third conversion' have been largely ignored as if they were not so important for his thought. As one reads Shaull's writings from the mid-1990s to the time of his death, it becomes clear that one last encounter was very significant to him, his encounter with Pentecostalism. Whereas many scholars have seen the boom of Pentecostalism in Latin America as a response that replaces the emphases given by liberation theologians in the previous decades, Shaull, on the contrary, understands Pentecostalism as a complement or radicalization of an important tenet of liberation theology, namely the hermeneutical privilege of the poor.

In 1996 Shaull wrote an article in which he affirmed that liberation theology was alive and well in Latin America. On the other hand, he recognized that it was going through a process of renewal, which asked for more participation of those traditionally marginalized and excluded from theological elaborations. According to him, a new generation of liberation theologians in Latin America did not want simply to *be* with the poor and *do* theology *for* them. Instead, they wanted theology to rise *from* the poor themselves. Looking at this situation, Shaull noticed that new theological voices were arising in Latin America: the voices of women, peasants, indigenous peoples, and Pentecostals. (1996:48-50) His earlier experiences with the base communities in Central America had definitely convinced him of the hermeneutical advantage of the perspective of the poor, and now he wanted to carry this principle to its ultimate consequences. His encounter with the base communities were impressive to him because here he saw in those poor and almost illiterate people an amazing capacity to understand the depth of the Biblical message to an extent that he could not, despite all his theological formation. From that first experience with the base communities in the 1980's on, Shaull decided that it was indispensable for him to meet with these poor communities regularly so that he could really understand what God was doing and how God was trying to address him through these communities.

He expected that these encounters would deepen his faith and teach him the real meaning of Christ's discipleship. When he was not able to meet with the Latin American base communities, he attended prayer services in a poor black church in the United States. He expected to listen to God's voice in these encounters with the poor. (Shaul 1998:75)

Later on, when Shaul was invited by Waldo Cesar to do a two-year field research among Pentecostal churches in the shantytowns of Rio de Janeiro, instead of adopting the 'objective' approach of the typical participant observation method of the social sciences, Shaul approached these Pentecostal churches and people as someone who was convinced not only that the Spirit of God was acting *among* them, but also wanted to address other Christians *through* them. Therefore, as he met with them, he felt that he was stepping onto holy ground, into a new frontier where God was doing something new.

That does not mean, however, that his approach was uncritical. He soon realized that the things he was seeing among these churches were part of a new expression of Christian faith that was significantly different from Christian faith as it had been defined by the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. However, "if developed in faithfulness to the biblical witness, this vision and experience of Christian faith...could offer a compelling response to the present crisis of civilization, especially to the vast numbers of poor and excluded people victimized by it" (Shaul 1998:71). Thus he challenged the so-called historical churches to engage the Pentecostal world in an open dialogue. The terms of that dialogue would be the same he used to determine the character of his earlier conversations with Marxism, during the 1950's and 1960's. In other words, there should be sufficient openness and humbleness to learn from the Pentecostals as well as to discern what God wanted to say to us non-Pentecostals through them. On the other hand, there should be enough critical reflection to allow for re-orientation and even protest, when necessary. Shaul continued to be a Protestant, despite all his encounters and conversions.

In his contacts with Brazilian Pentecostals, Shaul seemed to be enchanted by them. He realized that Pentecostals had managed to touch the lives of the poor in a deeper way than the base communities, because they spoke a language known by those living in that context, and offered them a sense of dignity that they had never experienced before. Instead of stressing a preferential option for the poor, Pentecostals often speak about rejecting poverty. In contrast with the more traditional churches, they are not so con-

cerned about the right doctrine, but focus instead upon a living and dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit, which makes the power of God visible to them in daily lives. Shaull was aware that despite the almost fifty years of struggle against social injustice and poverty in Latin America, more and more people continued to be victimized by harsh living conditions, unemployment, homelessness, and lack of decent health care, security and even food. He understood that human suffering and social injustice have escalated in to such a degree that "our future may depend upon nothing less than the reconstruction of human life and community at the most basic level" (Shaull 1998:2). In the Pentecostal churches he visited in Rio de Janeiro, Shaull realized that the people who were most victimized by this erosion of human community have found a profound faith capable of awakening in them a hope for the future, as they experience God's power in their daily lives. Although they believe that the world is inhabited by demons which cause the evils that they face, these Pentecostals believe that they are safely protected by the hand of God. With this faith, they become able to create an oasis of peace amidst a reality full of violence. The faith in the living presence of the Holy Spirit has helped many of these victims of a social order that failed them to be able to reconstruct their lives and relationships. Despite the fact that Pentecostals in Latin American generally place a greater emphasis than mainstream Protestants upon the personal aspects of human life, many Pentecostals have, as a result of their immersion in the dimension of the Spirit, heard God's calling to become more involved in the struggle regarding social issues and solidarity. This observation on Shaull's part gave him the hope that the Pentecostal faith that he encountered in Rio's slums could become very significant in the struggle for social change.

When Shaull spoke of this *third conversion* he was not inviting all Christians to become Pentecostals. Instead, he invited them to open themselves to the riches of the Pentecostal churches in a way that would allow them to connect with the symbolic world of the poorer classes, which is impregnated with the sort of symbolism and expressions employed by the Pentecostals. If mainstream Christians were to do this, he believed, they would discover new ways of building solidarity and of deepening their own faith. (Shaull 1997:33) For him, then, the 'third conversion' was a natural outcome for those who had undergone the 'second conversion', i.e., for those who had become sensitive to the plight of the poor, as well as to the biblical cry for justice. The 'third conversion' only makes sense to those who believe in the value of sharing the life and suffering of the oppressed. Shaull understood that these people

were now being called to a more radical step, that of opening themselves to be transformed by the encounter with the symbolic world of the poor. Shaull felt that mainstream Protestantism was challenged to let itself be “surprised by discoveries of how the Holy Spirit works when an old order is breaking down and a new order has not yet emerged” (Shaull 1998:5). Shaull was convinced that in this Pentecostal-nonPentecostal encounter, the nonPentecostals could contribute new theological ways of framing the experience of empowerment by the Spirit lived out in these Pentecostal communities. The call for a ‘third conversion,’ then, is at heart an invitation to an encounter with the *other*. Shaull teaches us, like Emmanuel Levinas, that ethics and theology begins in a face-to-face encounter with the *other*. In the case of Shaull’s third conversion, the *other* whose face we mainline Protestants should face is the *Pentecostal other*.

CONCLUSION

In his life, Richard Shaull managed to combine a firm set of ethics and a sense of mission with an extraordinary capacity for letting himself be transformed by the diverse encounters he had with different realities and people. When one reads his writings one notices that ever since his youth he carefully nurtured his passion for justice, and his faith that God is alive and active in the world. Nevertheless, it is precisely the firmness of his belief in the dynamic presence of God—a presence always acting in new and surprising ways in the world—that prevented his theology from being frozen into a rigid, final form. As I have demonstrated, from beginning to end Shaull was always trying to discern the ways God is acting now, and what God is calling us to do today. It is in this context that one finds him speaking of ‘conversions’ as an analogy for the diverse transforming encounters that he had throughout his journey. In fact, if one reads his autobiographical writings, one will see that he used this analogy to describe several moments of his life. There was a conversion in the classroom at Princeton, another in his first encounter with poverty in Colombia, another conversion as he met the base communities in Central America, and finally a conversion as he interacted with the Pentecostals. Richard Shaull left us all, as part of his legacy, a challenge to nurture this capacity for allowing oneself be transformed, that is, allowing oneself to be *converted* by one’s constant encounters with a God that comes to us from the future, and is manifest in the faces, actions, prac-

tices and beliefs of those who live in the underside of history. Shaull's life and faith can give us a lesson in humility. Throughout his life he always engaged the *other* in a serious and active way, so that he could meet the *Totally Other* in his encounters with these different *others*. Shaull, however, never gave in to a simplistic adhesion to, or integration with, the *other*. On the contrary, because he respected the *other's* otherness, and the Divine presence in the *other*, he engaged all others with an open and critical mind, never passively.

Shaull's legacy should not be forgotten. His last challenge to the mainstream church was that they should not only *encounter* face-to-face the reality and the world of the oppressed, but that mainstream Christians should become open to *listen* to their testimony. Theology is challenged to be creative and re-creative, and to play its role as a force to transform and re-create our logics. Since he believed that God is, today, doing something new among the Pentecostals, Shaull called upon non-Pentecostals to let the Spirit speak to us through them. His last appeal to mainstream North-American Christianity should be heard in his own words:

If we take all this seriously, we cannot escape the fact that it calls for a radical change in our mission strategy: a decision first of all to enter into the world of the poor, to re-situate ourselves among the poor ... Now this doesn't just mean re-situating ourselves geographically among the poor, although that in itself would mean a formidable change of direction. To enter the world of the poor means to enter into their *religious* world, and allow ourselves to become broken by that experience and thus become wounded healers as Christ was... Our traditional churches are not going to take these steps toward solidarity with the poor. But there is one thing we can do and that is urgently needed. We can find ways of relating authentically to Christian communities, largely Pentecostal, who are living this relationship, if we are willing to become wounded to go through a process of *kenosis* which permits us to relate to them and engage in dialogue with them, on their terms not ours. That in itself is something we have hardly begun to do... And a second radical change is called for: not just to move toward the world of the poor but also *to be open to their witness to us*. (Shaull 2002:1)

This is the prophetic call for a third conversion, which comes to the church from someone who dared to remain a prophet to us to the very the end.

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Morality and Meaning in a Time of Terror

A REVIEW ESSAY BY SCOTT R. PAETH

Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World. By Jean Bethke Elshtain. New York: Basic Books, 2003.

War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning. By Chris Hedges. New York: Public Affairs, 2002.

On the first anniversary of the United States' invasion of Iraq, President George W. Bush declared: "There is no neutral ground — no neutral ground — in the fight between civilization and terror, because there is no neutral ground between good and evil, freedom and slavery, and life and death. The war on terror is not a figure of speech. It is an inescapable calling of our generation" (Bush 2004). This statement illustrates two characteristics of the Bush administration that have been widely noted – its dualism (verging on Manicheaism) and its political messianism. By painting the world in shades of black and white, and placing the mantel of righteousness squarely on our own shoulders, the Bush administration has framed the war on terror as divine mission to eradicate evil and inaugurate the eschatological era of democracy and freedom for the entire world.

The image that this calls to mind is of the Stalwart Sheriff – Gary Cooper, perhaps – forced by circumstances and his own sense of responsibility to strap on his holster and stand alone on a dusty main street, ready to face off against all the powers and principalities of corruption and iniquity. In the face of such righteousness, how *can* there be neutrality? We are either with the Sheriff, or we are with the terrorists. Two recent, and quite different, books offer challenging perspectives against which this image should be evaluated. In one case, the United States has clearly been cast in the role of Stalwart Sheriff; in the other, our situation is more complex, and demands of us a

more self-critical perspective from which to view the whole enterprise of war-making.

In *Just War Against Terror*, Jean Bethke Elshtain lays out a moral case in favor of the war on terror, arguing against “so many” who “tick off a list of American ‘failures’ or even insist that America brought the horrors of September 11, 2001, on herself” (Elshtain, 2). Central to her argument is the contention that the terrorists with whom we are at war are not susceptible to rational engagement, and thus only open warfare provides the means for dealing with them. She dismisses alternative strategies geared toward resolving the “root issues” of terrorism, such as poverty and anger over U.S. foreign policy, arguing that “no such change, either singly or together, will deter Osama bin Laden and those like him” (Elshtain, 3). Elshtain’s arguments are worthy of serious examination, for she makes a closely reasoned and potent argument in favor of an aggressive stance toward terrorism. Yet, her argument suffers from such a plethora of sweeping generalizations, straw man arguments, and gross caricatures that the force of her overall thesis is lost.

Elshtain begins by trying to clarify the language surrounding the events of September 11th, arguing that any attempts to describe the planners and perpetrators of the attacks as anything other than terrorists – such as “soldiers” or even “mass murderers” obscures both the intention of their actions — “to sow terror” (Elshtain, 18) — and the moral status of their acts — “nihilism” (Elshtain, 19). Additionally, she is at pains to distinguish justified from unjustified violence as well as the idea of “justice” from that of “revenge.”

Elshtain is very thorough at drawing such distinctions. She recognizes, as did her sources Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, the way in which sentimentality and false consciousness can contribute to bad faith in analyzing morally fraught situations. By masking the distinctions between the United States and al Qaeda, and between the just and unjust use of force, we risk a moral inertia born of, at best, fuzzy-headedness and, at worst, the kind of self-loathing that Nietzsche would have appreciated.

Elshtain is undoubtedly right that distinctions of these kinds must be made in order to arrive at a moral understanding of terrorism, and for discerning a proper response. Yet at the same time she avoids other distinctions that would complicate the moral clarity that she wants to establish. For example, she agrees with President Bush’s statements that “we are hated because of our freedoms and our rights” (24). But this is too simplistic, whether it comes from Elshtain or from Bush. Certainly liberal democratic forms of life are perceived as degenerate by Osama bin Laden and many Islamic radi-

cals, but any meaningful or constructive analysis of terrorism needs to go beyond this and consider the perception that endures linking Western Democracy with oppressive political legacies in the Middle East. What to us appears to be freedom may appear to many in the Muslim world to be license. More importantly, our foreign policy is perceived by many around the world to have less to do with the extension of liberty than with the establishment of hegemony. Historian Chalmers Johnson (2000) uses the term "blowback" to describe this phenomenon.

Elshtain critiques the concept of blowback, characterizing it as "a reaction we brought on ourselves by being engaged with the world" (82). Yet, tellingly, nowhere in her discussion does she cite Johnson, with whom the term took on popular cachet. Johnson is more circumspect, writing: "Even an empire cannot control the long-term effects of its policies. That is the essence of blowback" (Johnson 2000: 13).¹ The point, contrary to Elshtain's argument, is not that we "deserved" the attacks of September 11th, or that we "brought them on ourselves," as critics of U.S. foreign policy are often accused of saying. Rather, the point is that our actions have consequences that stretch far beyond our ability to calculate.

Elshtain endorses historian Louis Menand's contention that the blowback argument leads to "only two alternatives: isolationism or conquest." Elshtain contends that isolationism is not an option, and refuses to give credence to the possibility that we might in fact be engaged in a project of conquest, and therefore concludes that the blowback argument is invalid. Yet neither Menand nor Elshtain consider a third alternative: A just involvement in international affairs, rather than one that seeks to extend and preserve U.S. global power.²

The thrust of Elshtain's argument is in the direction of a unilateralist exercise of U.S. power on behalf of the world. She is critical of multilateral

¹ That having been said, Johnson is highly critical of U.S. foreign policy, and particularly the Cold War activities of the CIA, arguing that these activities have created situations that will inevitably produce the blowback that he documents. Yet, although Johnson presents quite a stark picture of consequences of our involvement abroad, he does not provide much by way of a constructive proposal for how we can credibly remedy the situation.

² Although the extension and preservation of U.S. power has been on the agenda of every administration since the end of World War II, the Bush administration has been particularly brazen in its advocacy of a global situation in which there is no possible rival to U.S. power. This was the thesis of a report

efforts such as the International Criminal Court, asserting (though not really *arguing*) that “relying on international courts to make a just response to attacks like those of September 11 lets those who are responsible off the hook almost by definition” (Elshtain, 165). It is the province of U.S. power to protect the world, for this power entails a recognition of deep moral responsibility. Elshtain never gives adequate attention, however, to the dual questions that arise in the face of U.S. power, namely, do we use our power justly, and might the unjust use of power not subject us to the possibility of future terrorist attacks?

Elshtain’s silence on the historical unjust use of American power, by act or omission, coupled with her refusal to take seriously some of the terrorists’ claims, causes her to downplay possible alternative accounts of the current situation. Elshtain takes for granted that “war” is an adequate term to describe the action that must be taken against terrorism, without considering whether the mechanisms of international law enforcement might produce better results. It is true that we apply the term “war” to many endeavors that are not military in character (the War on Poverty, the War on Drugs), but the context (as well as the rhetoric of the current presidential campaign), makes clear that the “War on Terror” is meant to be understood literally as a *war* on terror, with all of the military accoutrements this implies, including the application of Just War theory.

Additionally, she takes for granted the idea that “terrorism” is something against which one can wage a “war.” This is problematic on two fronts. First, “terrorism” is an idea, a tactic, rather than an enemy. It is an evil and immoral idea, but an idea nonetheless, against which a war in the military sense is not really possible or even meaningful. To abolish any popular support for terrorism requires a war of *ideas*, in which we make a case for a binding principle of civilian immunity. Unless we alter the very basis of thinking about political violence, terror will always be a tactic of asymmetrical warfare.

Far more importantly, we must fight against al Qaeda, and more specifically we must bring to bear the instruments of international law enforcement and investigation to the hunt for the organization, its leaders, and its

published by the Project for a New American Century (2000), entitled *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century*. Among the participants in the project was current administration Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. One of the main authors of this report was Donald Kagan, whom Elshtain takes as a credible source in her discussion of the need to “take the terrorists at their word” (Elshtain, 85).

sources of funding. The rhetoric of war obscures this very central requirement while allowing us to clothe our actions in the robes of military necessity.

The second problem with her argument is her presumption that to be a terrorist is to be *per se* beyond the capacity for reason. By and large, terrorism is a tactic in situations where direct military engagement is impossible.³ It does not follow from this that terrorists are *per se* not susceptible to negotiation or compromise. The historical record has shown that the IRA, the Basque Separatists, and even Hamas show evidence of adjusting targets, tactics, and goals through good faith negotiations and changing political conditions. A blanket condemnation of terrorists as irrational or unjustified may be too hasty.

Elshtain argues, no doubt rightly, that in any case *Osama bin Laden* is irrational, and no attempts to negotiate, compromise, or change policy are likely to deter *him* from seeking further violence against the West. She asserts repeatedly that to attempt to satisfy bin Laden would imply a complete withdrawal from international affairs. But although bin Laden may be unreasonable, she never considers the possibility that a more just U.S. foreign policy would affect his ability to recruit associates and financial backers. Changes in U.S. policy that would create a more participatory international situation, in which we were perceived to be acting as a fair arbiter in situations of conflict, would probably not affect bin Laden or his more dedicated followers, but it would severely undermine the popularity of his cause in the Islamic world.

Elshtain's objective in *Just War Against Terror* is not simply to make the case *for* the war on terror, but to offer a trenchant criticism of many of the responses made to September 11th by, in particular, academic and theological commentators. She speaks in very broad terms of how "the Academy" responded to the terrorist attacks. In light of this, one might assume that Elshtain offers a broad survey of academic responses to the attacks. One

³ Michael Walzer points out that the word "terrorism" itself is in dispute. It is, he notes, "most often used to describe revolutionary violence" (Walzer 1977: 197). Yet prior to World War II, what we understand to be terrorism – large scale action against civilian populations, was relatively rare. What went by the name of "terrorism" would be more accurately described today as "political assassination" (198). Although Elshtain and other commentators on the issue do not say so, the implication of their arguments tends toward the principle that terrorism is what civilians do, but is not a category to describe military action by states, terrifying or not.

would be mistaken. Elshtain instead offers four concrete examples of “academia’s” response to terrorism. She refers to the reactions of Joan Baez and Gore Vidal, neither of whom could be classified as “academics” in any meaningful sense, and the writings of Noam Chomsky and Mark L. Taylor, both of whom are certainly academics, but neither of whom plausibly represent the breadth of academic reaction to the bombings.⁴ Elshtain has similarly harsh words for the reaction of pastors and church leaders to the attacks, invoking Niebuhr and Tillich as a contrast. Here she is much more convincing, pointing out that the failure of many Christian leaders to respond in a morally appropriate way is largely due to the theological vacuousness of much contemporary Protestant ecclesial leadership. She correctly holds up Pope John Paul II’s response to the attacks as a theologically nuanced and appropriate reaction.

What ties all of the strands of Elshtain’s argument together is a sense that, without the strong leadership of the United States in the world today, civilization is at grave risk. There is a chauvinism to this attitude that distorts the complexities of the use of U.S. policies and power in the world, the causes and cures of terrorism, and the nature of discourse in the academic community. In fairness to Elshtain, her book is intended to be a polemic. Yet, even when Elshtain’s points are well-made, her failure to consider their nuances leads one to suspect that winning the debate is more important to her than arriving at the truth. Elshtain’s argument is forceful, but lacks the requisite humility that moral reflection on war requires. She places too much faith in authority, grants too little charity to the positions of her adversaries (terrorist and academic alike), and is too quick to assert the certainty of her position. An Augustinian sense of human sin and error might also consider the limitations of those authorities: quick to rush to war, hasty to make generali-

⁴ A far more convincing survey of academic reaction to September 11th would have been to read the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on September 28, 2001, which contained a large and diverse set of reactions to the attacks, the vast majority of which could not be accused “ignoring or distorting the facts” about the attacks, nor accusing the U.S. of a “mad rush to war,” nor arguing that “America created Osama bin Ladin.” Furthermore, these articles could not be accused of using “worn-out categories and false analogies” as Elshtain would have it. A web search of the word “terrorism” on the *Chronicle of Higher Education*’s website would have discovered a remarkable diversity of reaction recorded throughout academia in the last 3 years. Furthermore, it would be instructive if Elshtain could explain just when Noam Chomsky became the spokesperson for “academia” in the first place.

zations, and speedy to impugn the rationality of terror while promoting a foreign policy guided not by reason, but by partisan interests.

Christopher Hedges' *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* is in its own way equally provocative. But whereas Elshtain's polemical argument for the War on Terror suffers from playing fast and loose with its arguments, Hedges offers a subtle account of both what makes war attractive to us as human beings and why it is so horrible.

Hedges is not a theologian (although he does possess a Master of Divinity degree). He is a war correspondent for the *New York Times*. His book is written as a meditation on the way in which war, as the title states, provides meaning in a threatening world. He writes: "The enduring attraction of war is this: Even without its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living. Only when we are in the midst of conflict does the shallowness and vapidness of much of our lives become apparent" (Hedges, 3). Hedges brings a strong theological sense to his analysis, recognizing both the moral corruption that accompanies war, and yet not flinching in the face of war's often inescapable necessity:

Even as I detest the pestilence that is war and fear its deadly addiction, even as I see it lead states and groups towards self-immolation, even as I concede that it is war that has left millions of dead and maimed across the planet, I, like most reporters in Sarajevo and Kosovo, desperately hoped for armed intervention (Hedges, 16).

In recognizing the moral ambiguity of war, Hedges nevertheless wants to understand its spiritual destructiveness. To go to war, it is necessary, argues Hedges, to be convinced of the "myth of war."

By the "myth of war," Hedges means the psychological process by which we create a narrative of our own implacable righteousness, in contrast to the stark evil of our enemy. The corollary to this is that the evil we face must be utterly vanquished in order to secure a lasting, perhaps eternal, peace.⁵ As the President says, "There is no neutral ground ... in the fight against evil." Like Elshtain, Hedges is concerned with the corruption of language surrounding war, yet unlike Elshtain, he sees that perversion taking place among

⁵ And indeed, this pattern can be seen repeated yet again in the literature of the War on Terror. Witness, for example, the recent volume published by Richard Pearle, of the Defense Policy Institute (an organization that advises the Pentagon), and former White House speechwriter David Frum. Their book, *An End to Evil* (2004) presents exactly the kind of Manichean morality of which Hedges writes.

all participants. Jingoistic rhetoric is intertwined with dangerous nationalistic fervor that infects nations at war, including our own: "Overweening pride and a sense of national solidarity swept through the city like an electric current. It was as if I had woken up, like one of Kafka's characters, and found myself transformed into a huge bug. I would come to feel this way in every nation at war, including the United States after the attacks of September 11th" (Hedges 44).

For those at war, the experience is like a drug: "Once we begin to take war's heady narcotic, it creates an addiction that slowly lowers us to the moral depravity of all addicts" (Hedges 25). Just as a drug displaces that which is truly valuable in life, and dissolves the connections between the addict and the real world, so does war dissolve and destroy collective memory and cultural values. Everything that is good and true, according to Hedges, is subordinated in war to the support of "The Cause":

War finds its meaning in death. The cause is built on the backs of victims, portrayed always as innocent. Indeed, most conflicts are ignited with martyrs, whether real or created. The death of an innocent, one who is perceived as emblematic of the nation or the group under attack, becomes the initial rallying point for war. These dead bodies become the standard-bearers of the cause and all causes feed off the steady supply of corpses (Hedges 144)

The addictive power of war – its narcotic attraction – is indicative of the basic struggle between a love of life and a love of death. The one addicted to war, whether in Kosovo or Kansas, is addicted to death, Thanatos. "Happiness is elusive and protean. And it is sterile when devoid of meaning. But meaning, when it is set in the vast arena of war with its high stakes, its adrenaline-driven rushes, its bold sweeps and drama, is heartless and self-destructive" (Hedges 159).

For all of this, however, Hedges recognizes the persistent reality, and perhaps even the moral necessity, of war, for "the poison that is war does not free us from the ethics of responsibility. There are times when we must take this poison ... There are times when the force wielded by one immoral faction must be countered by a faction that, while never moral, is perhaps less immoral" (Hedges 16).

All of this is true, and so we cannot make an end of war. Hedges is correct that war can provide meaning in a world of triviality. With few other strong forces to give our lives significance, Thanatos has an inexorable attraction.

The only force which has the potential to free us from the power of death is, in the end, love:

when Thanatos is ascendant, the instinct must be to reach out to those we love, to see in them all the divinity, pity and pathos of the human. And to recognize love in the lives of others – even those with whom we are in conflict – love that is like our own. It does not mean we will avoid war or death. It does not mean that we as distinct individuals will survive. But love, in its mystery, has its own power. It alone gives meaning that endures. It alone allows us to embrace and cherish life. (Hedges 184-5).

It is difficult to assess this conclusion. Hedges recognizes war as a conflict among peoples, while love is a matter between individuals. His appeal to love is not a solution to the problems inherent in war, *per se*, except insofar as they may aid us to keep our sanity in the midst of an insane situation. But if war is a poison that we must occasionally ingest for the sake of preventing great evil, can even love rescue us from madness? Love cannot save civilizations, except insofar as it is transformed into justice. Clearly, power without love or justice becomes a demonic worship of death, but Hedges' appeal to love, without an analysis of its relationship to power or to justice risks becoming merely sentimental. As Elshtain would quickly remind us, Reinhold Niebuhr's legacy is one of moral responsibility in opposition to such sentimentality.

Thus we have two volumes, each of which is concerned with the ambiguous terrain of war, justice, and morality. Both authors are keenly aware of the moral compromises political responsibility demands in a dangerous world. Both authors are also aware of the distortions that ideology and egoism can create in our capacity for moral judgment and self-understanding. Both appeal, in different ways, to the legacy of Reinhold Niebuhr. In Elshtain's case, she sees the war on terror as a clear case of the just use of military force in the name of a righteous cause, and she makes a compelling argument on that score. Hedges is interested in a different question, namely: what does war do to us? What kind of human beings does it create? While Elshtain's argument is designed to make a strong appeal in favor of strong action, Hedges asks us to pause and comprehend just what it is that we do.

In its broad details, much of what Elshtain says in favor of the War on Terror is compelling, and if the only alternative to such a war is resignation, then it is true that the terrorists have already won. But like Hedges, I cannot

bring myself to the kind of confidence in our collective righteousness that seems to motivate Elshtain's case. Our past – and our present – is much too ambiguous for that.

In the end I am drawn back to that image of the Sheriff standing on a dusty street. Yet it is not the iconic image of Gary Cooper that I see, but merely a fallible human being. It may indeed be just for him to make his stand, or it may be simply necessary in order to hold back the tide of chaos for one more day. In either case, he acts on my behalf, for I am of the town he protects. Therefore I am responsible for his actions, and cannot take comfort or solace in the myth of war.

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The Changing Shape of Church History. By Justo L. González. Chalice, 2002, vii and 159 pages.

In this book, Justo González, a prolific author of books on church history, considers two concerns: what *has changed* in the church today and what *has to be changed* in the writing of church history. Accordingly, he presents his historiographical probing in a twofold structure: spatial (Part I. "The Changing Geography of Church History") and temporal (Part II. "The Changing History of Church History"). González writes from an observation that in the West the church has declined and has been de-centered while in the non-Western world the church has experienced dynamic and diverse growth. From this context, González examines the implications for church historians of two potential characteristics of the church: catholicity and marginality.

In Part I, González figuratively conveys the contour of world Christianity in both geographical and geological terms to illustrate three aspects of the recent change in the way church historians have interpreted the church's history. The first aspect of this change is "cartographical." The church has become global, both geographically and demographically. The old map of church history in which the center was the North Atlantic, mainly Europe and North America, is no longer adequate for church historians. He suggests a new, "polycentric" map (13). This new map demonstrates that Christianity has become a world religion with "deep roots in every culture" (17).

The second aspect of this historiographical change is "topographical." If the former notion is horizontal, the latter is vertical. González observes that church historians have usually approached the past from a mountain-peak perspective, that is, by looking at it from atop. The result has been an orography—"without ever descending into the valleys" (22). González argues that the voices hidden in these less prominent valleys should be listened to: the voices of the powerless, the marginalized, the women, etc. This topographical change signifies perspectival shifts: from center to margin, from surface to depth, and from top down to bottom up.

The third aspect of the recent change in the way church history is viewed is the "cataclysmic" nature of this change. "Continental shifts" are taking place in the interpretation of what were formerly seen as the "great centuries," of change in the church, that is, the fourth, thirteenth, sixteenth, and nineteenth centuries (34). One example of this "new tilt" is that the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, formerly interpreted primarily in light of the

the political and theological developments of the Reformation and the rise of modernity, are now being reconsidered with regard to the Western expansion of Christianity and the implications of this expansion for world Christianity. A new awareness of the importance of previously “submerged” centuries is rising as well. For example, some historians are beginning to see the cultural context of the church of the second and third centuries as being similar to the cultural context of the church in the twenty-first century, in that it is in many places culturally marginal. And the previously “submerged” seventh and eighth centuries are now being seen as important because of the Germanization of the church.

Part II is a brief historiographical survey of church history. From the beginning, Christians had a fundamental issue of history with which to deal. “[O]ne of the main theological issues that Christians had to face,” González points out, “was the relationship between [the] . . . prolonged history of humankind and the message of the gospel” (87). Each period of church history has struggled, historiographically, with the relationship between the gospel and history in one way or another, framing it, for example, as a relationship between the gospel and the history of Israel (in the New Testament), between the gospel and Greco-Roman history (in the early period), between the gospel and the history of Germanic nations (during the Middle Ages), and between the gospel and the history of the church (during the Reformation and modern times).

González surveys the limitations of past historiographical approaches: ecclesiocentric (early), dichotomic (medieval), polemical (Reformation), and critical (modern). None of these approaches can adequately describe today’s church. González suggests a new framework that is bidirectional, which looks both forward (toward postmodernity and beyond) and backward (toward the catholicity of the early church). González argues that the claim of modern historians that their historiographical methods are grounded in objectivity and universality is simply another myth and failure. For him, even the postmodern denial of this modern claim is not enough to undo its influence: “The very name *postmodernity* is still suspiciously modern” (57). González advocates going further beyond postmodernity to what he terms “extramodernity,” – a historiographical perspective whose concern is to listen to those voices and perspectives that both modernity and postmodernity have ignored and patronized (59). González considers the importance of “catholicity” for church history, defining the term as meaning “according to the whole” (71). He distinguishes this term from ‘univer-

sality,' which emphasizes uniformity rather than unity with diversity. González emphasizes that the Christian canon is the very "paradigm of catholicity" (76). For example, the four gospels in the New Testament bear plural perspectives of catholicity in their witnesses to the same Jesus.

González's historiographical survey ends with envisioning a future, globalized, yet diversified world Christianity. This shape of the future church will affect both the reading of past church history and the writing of new church history. Considering that the church is becoming more and more universal (worldwide), it needs to avert a particular ideology being regarded as the center. It also needs to avoid "the old division between 'church history' and the 'history of missions'" (149). Considering that the church is becoming more and more catholic (diverse), it needs to account for "diversity and inclusivity in matters of gender, class, culture, and race" (150). González argues that the church has always, up to this century, seen itself as "the center". For example, both Eusebius' paradigm (the church as corporeal center) and Augustine's paradigm (the church as spiritual center) share a triumphalistic perspective. González suggests an alternative self-perception for the church, a self-image of "incarnate marginality" which sees the proper place for Christians as being the margin rather than the center (153). He thus indicates that the future church and its historiography should move their perspective from the center to the margins.

This book deserves our attention because the author outlines the contours and sketches a conceptual framework for world Christianity. World Christianity is globally local. If the modern historiographical project is the de-clothing of culture from Christianity, the historiography of world Christianity should, from its post-modern context, offer a reversal to this "de-clothing" ideal. It should, therefore, probe the closeness of the relationship between the gospel and culture, calling attention to the extent to which Christianity is, in fact — and has been — deeply culturally-imbedded. The Christian gospel relativizes every ideology that claims its absoluteness in place of God. The concept of world Christianity destabilizes traditional categories of the church and decentralizes Euro-American centrism. The voices that seem to be missing in this book, given its attention to factors changing church history and its historiography, are the voices of missions scholars such as Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh. Their historiographical contributions go far beyond the consideration of Christian expansion. A new conceptual framework should take the work of historians of Christian mission into consideration and thus ask the question: how much have different

voices and diverse perspectives contributed to the understanding of the gospel throughout church history?

This book's style and language is quite accessible. It could help pastors upgrade their past study of church history and expand the horizon of their understanding of world Christianity. This book calls for a historiographical awakening for church historians. Would a new Christian historiography enlarge the Christian story? Would it revise some stories? Would it enlighten the nature of Christianity? Would it enrich and refine the understanding of the gospel? If so, then how much and in what ways? Consideration of the changing shape of Christianity González mentions in this book is essential to answer these questions. We cannot take this change for granted.

—HYUNG JIN PARK
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Rhetoric of the Gospel: Theological Artistry in the Gospels and Acts. C. Clifton Black. Chalice Press, 2001; xvii, 224 pages.

In the wake of renewed interest in rhetorical analysis, C. Clifton Black offers a collection of essays crafted to demonstrate how aspects of this rising trend can be applied to New Testament study and exegesis. A scholar whose work is centered around rhetorical criticism, Black is known for the assiduous nature of his work and studies. This present volume – intended for theological students, his colleagues, and pastors – is illuminated throughout by his theological insights. With the exception of the final chapter, “Peroration,” all of it is previously published material, though revised and edited where needed.

A full analysis of the rhetoric of “the gospel” as contained in the New Testament would fill volumes. Thus, Black has chosen to examine pericopes from each of the four Gospels and Acts in order to demonstrate how rhetorical criticism can be applied to any passage from these books. He concentrates upon characterizing and analyzing the arrangement and use of invention and style in these texts. His primary focus is character analysis. The “New Rhetorical” framework seems to place his work within the concerns of literary critical theory, but many of the interests of literary study and form criticism are not taken up in this collection. Indeed Black notes several times that the incredibly wide scope of rhetorical study is beyond what he is able to demonstrate adequately within the approach he has chosen.

In his introductory chapter, “Rhetorical Questions in New Testament Study,” Black explains the basic groundwork for rhetorical criticism, situating the major impetus of the movement in Muilenburg’s 1968 SBL Presidential address. Black’s view of rhetorical criticism is fully grounded in this classical tradition. He demonstrates three different interpretations of a single passage based on different aspects of rhetorical criticism: Muilenburg on structure (*logos*); Kennedy on authorial intent (*ethos*); and Perelman on *pathos*, or a text’s reception by the ancient audience. His final introductory comment, “In effect, this [book] will be a colloquy within a kind of New Rhetorical framework, ‘baptized’ in the service of Christian theology and practice,” (20) summarizes well the tenor of the book and prepares the reader accurately for what is to come.

As indicated by the title of the second chapter, “Matthew’s Characterization of Faith,” Black then takes a look at the possibilities that character analysis/criticism offer. The jumping off point is set up as a discussion with Jack Dean Kingsbury’s appraisal of characters within the gospel of Matthew. Black’s refutation of Kingsbury’s assessment is founded upon a simple reapplication of what Kingsbury himself has claimed. He redefines the roundness and flatness of Kingsbury’s characters: Jesus, the disciples, Israel’s religious leaders, the Jewish crowds and “stock characters” — and adds God and the devil/Satan to the list. For Black, the most important rhetorical concern is the theological point that Matthew is trying to make through the characters. Throughout the chapter, Black’s full appropriation of rhetorical character analysis supports his own claims that each character’s significance lies primarily in his or her theological function.

Next Black takes a look at the theological implications of volatile material found in Mark 13, in a chapter entitled “An Oration at Olivet”. He shows how arrangement, invention and style all illuminate the possible intentions of this passage for the original audience. Indeed, a rhetorical analysis of this troublesome passage may be the most informative. Though Mark 13 is often viewed as one of the most tenebrous sections of that Gospel, Black’s rhetorical lens allows the reader to see that it may actually be closely aligned with the theological intent of Mark as a whole.

Next, addressing John 14-17—which Black considers the most epideictic section of John—he carefully explores the presence of amplification and other rhetorical devices found in John’s farewell discourse. Countering Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, Black convincingly brings the reader to the conclusion that the gospel of John is most appropriately ana-

lyzed through the lens of classical rhetoric. Working with the magnificence and grandeur of the rhetoric of John, Black teases out what he considers an overlooked connection between the rhetoric of the "Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle" (93).

"The Case of the Feckless Ficelle," a chapter from his 1994 work, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter*, is a rejoinder to those who have concluded that John Mark is an insignificant "bit player" within the story and message of Acts. True to his initial disclaimer, this chapter is more of an exegetical "redress" than an informative lesson on the aspects of rhetoric. Trusting that the interested student/reader will have learned the specifics earlier, or will learn them elsewhere, Black is a skillful teacher in this chapter as he demonstrates the way he claims rhetorical criticism should be employed in analyzing biblical texts.

In his chapter entitled, "The Rhetorical Form of the Early Christian Sermon," Black revisits Lawrence Wills's idea of the "word of exhortation," comprised of *exempla*, *conclusion*, and *exhortation*. Contrary to Wills's claims for divergence from the rhetorical norm, Black finds the essential point of sermon material to be wedded with the effects of classical rhetoric. His rather convincing argument prepares the reader to delve into, once again, the theological implications of persuasive rhetorical devices found within the Judeo-Christian sermon context.

The penultimate chapter, appropriately titled, "Four Stations en Route to a Parabolic Homiletic," has the feel of a sermon itself! It is at its core kerygmatically driven. From Nineveh, to Galilee, to Hippo and back to Jerusalem, Black analyzes the use of parable within the text and how those meanings translate over into homiletical efforts. In this chapter, Black shows his belief in the centrality of the cross for all Christian biblical exegesis and preaching.

As a conclusion, Black ends with a brief chapter aptly named "Peroration." The summary of his work points to three central ideas. Rhetorical criticism is composed of many approaches to the text. At the end of the day, there is a meaning to be found – *contra* those who leave scripture devoid of meaning by their endless critiques and dissections of the text. Finally, the ultimate artistry of the scriptures is found in their theological import. The biblical critic is charged to keep these things in mind as she or he sets out to illuminate the meanings found in the scriptures.

Black writes well for the mixed audience he has chosen. The new student of rhetorical criticism will find a helpful list of sources for specific areas of

rhetorical study in the preamble to the bibliography. Throughout the book, Black demonstrates the approach to exegesis that he wishes to engender in others. According to Black, the rhetorical effect of the gospel is intentional and deeply essential to the purpose of the whole written account. "Criticism of the Gospels that reckons with literary features such as characterization apart from their theological implications is by no means illegitimate. It is, in my judgment, ultimately impoverished" (46). The scholar uninterested in the theological implications of the rhetoric of the Gospels may be pleasantly challenged by Black in this book.

—JENNIFER G. BIRD
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

The Quest for the Cuban Christ. Miguel De La Torre. University of Florida Press, 2002.

The Quest for the Cuban Christ is a provoking, yet balanced search for Christ in the diversity of Cuban history and culture. Beginning with a sincere revelation of his own social location as a Cuban exile, Miguel De La Torre affirms that *The Quest for the Cuban Christ* is a search for faith and meaning. Using the methodologies of ethnohistory, historical theology and art history, De La Torre finds representations of the Cuban Christ in key Cuban historical figures and cultural symbols. De La Torre is careful to affirm both the Cuban resident and Cuban exile contexts, and to find unity in the person of Jesus Christ in the midst of the diversity between these two communities which are often at odds with one another. This unity is found in the *Ajiaco* Christ who represents several aspects of Cubanidad, or Cuban identity. Throughout the author's quest, Christ's presence is always found in *los humildes* (the oppressed).

Working chronologically, De La Torre gives several examples of Cuban heroes/heroines whom he sees as manifestating various aspects of the Cuban Christ. Beginning with the Spanish conquest of the Amerindians who originally inhabited Cuba, he focuses first on Hatuey, an indigenous rebel who battled the Spanish and was burned at the stake. De La Torre likens Hatuey's life and death to Christ's solidarity with the oppressed. He next focuses on Bartolome de Las Casas, a Spanish priest and missionary who, according to De La Torre, was converted to Christ via softening his heart to the plight of the Amerindians. Citing Gustavo Gutierrez, De La Torre considers De Las Casas to be a precursor to today's liberation theologians who

see Christ in the Indian. De Las Casas renounced his wealth and called upon the Spanish crown to stop abusing the Amerindians. Father Felix Varela, another cleric who opposed the Spanish colonial rule, fought from both inside and outside Cuba for independence. Raising consciousness about Cuban nationalism in the early 1800s, Varela's call for Cuban independence was met with persecution from Spain, and he was forced to leave for the United States—thus beginning Cuba's long tradition of nationalistic exiles. Jose Marti, a hero in both contemporary resident and exile Cuban communities, lived and raised support for Cuban independence while in exile, then returned to Cuba to die in battle. Cited by De La Torre as another precursor to liberation theology, Marti advocated a "preferential option for the poor," putting the liberation of the oppressed at the center of his agenda.

Because of its particular and intense suffering, De La Torre insists that the Afro-Cuban population has earned the title of the Black Cuban Christ. He reports gruesome massacres of blacks by white mobs fearing slave rebellion. Neither the abolition of slavery in 1886, nor the black and white intermarriage that resulted in a large population of mestizos, nor the active participation of blacks in the war of independence, nor Marti's writings aimed at creating a colorblind society were effective in halting white racism.

De La Torre regards the Afro-Cuban syncretistic religion, Santeria, which combines African deities with Catholic saints, as a revelation of the quality of resistance in the Cuban Christ. Santeria names the God on earth who responds to prayers *Olofi*. But De La Torre notes that while worshippers utter the name of *Olofi*, they often have Jesus Christ in mind. *Ochun* is the Afro-Cuban equivalent of *La Virgin del Cobre*, a brown virgin who appeared to two Taino Amerindians and a 10 year-old black slave named Juan Moreno in 1610. De La Torre argues that the appearance of a brown virgin to two Indians and a slave marks the emergence of a unique Cuban identity. Moreover, it is significant that they are fishing in a boat when the virgin appeared to them in the bay. Thus *La Virgin del Cobre* was, according to De La Torre, the first Cuban *balsera* (rafter) to be rescued. Today *Ochun*, or *La Virgin del Cobre*, is the Cuban patron saint, revered particularly by many *balseros* who see her as their protector and rescuer while they seek refuge across the Florida Straights. According to De La Torre, *La Virgin del Cobre* has become a model for women seeking full humanity in spite of the patriarchal structures of Cuban machismo.

De La Torre likens the Spanish exploitation of the virgin land to the sexual conquest of the Amerindian women. The Spanish raped both the land and

the women to gratify sexual urges, thus making both a possession. As a result: "The blood of the conquerors and *los humildes* converged in the veins of Cubans." (67) Since Jesus sought solidarity with the outcasts of society De La Torre's theological reflection upon the conquest suggests to him an image of the Cuban Christ as an Amerindian woman.

He gives examples of Cuban women who have reflected the resistance he sees as part of the nature of the Cuban Christ. Mariana Grajales, the mother of Antonio Maceo (a black general in Cuba's independence war) who was honored in Martí's writings, is one example of the *mambisas* who collaborated in the fields during Cuba's war for independence against Spain. Women's resistance in the struggle for independence transformed the position of women in society from victims to active participants. But sexism and machismo persist, according to De La Torres, who cites one of Fidel chauvenistic views on contemporary Cuban society as an example. (76).

De La Torre continues his search for a Christ who knows what it means to be Cuban with a creative review of contemporary Cuban religious art. Appreciating the work of both resident and exile artists, the author establishes that both exhibit a common Cuban longing for liberation. Suffering, nationalism and independence are common themes in the Christological paintings. De La Torre notes that one Afro-Cuban artist in exile, Alejandro Arneus, painted *Cristo Negro* (Black Christ), and thus challenged the white supremacy and racism prevalent among white exile Cubans in Miami.

Given the historical tensions between resident and exile Cubans, I very much appreciate the author's balanced review of Cuban history and art. While the author criticizes the sexism of President Fidel Castro and the racism of Miami Cubans, his social location as an exile Cuban may have inhibited him from acknowledging fully some of the gains of the socialist revolution. Having lived and worshipped on the island for several years, I am grateful for the gift of participating in an integrated church and society where blacks, whites, mulattos and Chinese-Cubans worship and live together in relative equality. Because I hope that it might function as a bridge of inclusiveness between the resident and exile Cuban communities, I would like to see this book translated into Spanish so that resident Cubans can also read and critique it from the lens of the homeland.

One must also recognize that Christianity is not the only religion on the island and perhaps not all suffering can, therefore, be viewed through a Christocentric lens. While syncretism is abundant, proponents of African Cuban religions may not want the worship of Olafi, Ochun, among others, to

be given a Christological interpretation. De La Torre has included the African Cuban religious experience as an important part of Cuban reality, but one must caution against forcing all religious experience into a Christian understanding—even if it is for the sake of unity.

In *The Quest for the Cuban Christ*, De La Torre offers a brilliant interpretation of the suffering Christ-figure in Cuban history. Models of the triumphant, transforming Christ are less frequent. If we are serious about social transformation we must, as we recall the passion of the cross, also celebrate the resurrection. It is true that realism about the extent of suffering in Cuba is especially present in contemporary Cuban art. But I appreciate De La Torre's hope for unity among resident and exile Cuban communities within the diversity of the *Ajiaco* Christ. It is precisely in the diversity of manifestations of the Cuban Christ found within Cuban heroes, heroines, and artistic images that Cubans can find faith, meaning, and De La Torre's hope for all Cubans, that is, unity.

—PHILIP WINGEIER-RAYO
CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Act & Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes. By Colin Gunton. Eerdmans, 2002, ix and 162 pages.

The British Reformed theologian Colin Gunton aimed throughout his career to articulate the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. He did so not only to understand God but because this doctrine supplies a framework for the development of other aspects of doctrine. Gunton additionally sought to reconstruct and revise the doctrine to reflect more deeply the truth of the Triune God. This book, the last one he prepared for publication before his untimely death in early 2003, is an essay on the revision of the divine attributes. While he develops a critical assessment of many previous treatments, as well as many of the antinomies facing the doctrine of the attributes, Gunton also provides outlines of solutions. This book offers an excellent introduction to the theology of the divine attributes and deserves consideration in future discussions not only of this particular aspect of the doctrine of God, but also in more fundamental reflection on the Triune God.

Gunton argues that the failings of the three traditional ways of deriving the divine attributes (namely, the ways of negation, eminence, and causality) have a common source in the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius and some aspects of the Greek philosophical tradition. Additionally, Gunton concerns

himself with the roots of the Greek criticism of anthropomorphism. He begins his own proposal in conversation with these lines of thought as they have affected the theological tradition.

After isolating the role language plays in these three ways of approaching the attributes, Gunton identifies a fundamental failing. The *via negativa* is very distrustful of human language and, given the numerous philosophical difficulties, it sees the way to God's attributes as barred because human speech cannot in any way satisfactorily depict God.

When we arrive at Gunton's insistence that the methods of deriving divine attributes must stem from analysis of divine action, we find ourselves at the center of his proposal. He argues for a strong relationship between being and act. We may identify God by the action of God because God's being is God's action. Gunton relies here on Karl Barth's actualism but also draws on Christoph Schwöbel's work on divine action.

Gunton's main canon of interpretation is that speech about God and knowledge of God start with God's economic action. This economic action is God's action in creation, reconciliation, and redemption. In speech and thought, if not in itself, God's being and action take the form of narrative. At this point, one would have to look at Gunton's other work to appreciate that by 'narrative' here he means more than 'story' because he briefly discusses how action is God's own work in the world without relating that action to the development of a humanly spoken narrative.

Protestant treatments of the attributes have generally distinguished between those that are communicable and incommunicable, or those that belong to God's essence and those that reside in God's relation to the world. This view of the attributes continues in modified forms throughout the modern age. But such a split already brings us back to the position that Gunton criticized. He thus follows Hermann Cremer in claiming that the two sets of attributes are better understood as those that are revealed in the economic divine action and those that are required in order for that action to occur. Thus he accomplishes in clear fashion a remarkable statement about the relationship between God's eternal being and God as God is for us.

However, Gunton makes such a claim by relying on God's eternity and freedom, two matters that are usually classed within the attributes. In Gunton's view, some attributes do not directly concern the divine action, but enable it. Thus, Gunton divides attributes into these two classes. Eternity and freedom (or put differently, God's aseity), are necessary conditions

for God's love, wisdom, holiness, and so on. But eternity is not a part of the action of God in history.

Eternity receives little reflection—except a footnote in which Gunton suspects that Barth's view of eternity leads to a mingling of time and eternity. According to Gunton's stated goals, the topic of eternity would seem to require the most concentrated attention in the book. However, the topic of freedom receives the most treatment. Gunton aims to show that God's love proves to be the most important attribute because it alone belongs to both classes of God's eternity and God's freedom (God's love for us is who God truly is), a tradition lodged deep in Christian history but clearly not stated previously in the precise way Gunton formulates it.

In a most revolutionary way, Gunton places the attributes within God's own eternal action as the Triune God. For Gunton, eternity is alive with God's action: both the Spirit loving the Father and Son, and other eternal divine actions. The attributes are grounded in the Father, Son, and Spirit's indivisible yet ordered action. Thus, one cannot give an account of God's love without reference to the eternal action of the Trinity. This itself advances upon Barth, because by Gunton's claim, the role of the Spirit is too little recognized in all of God's works and therefore in God's own being.

It would be impossible to pose questions about God's freedom or eternity to Gunton's book without noting that he himself provides the way to such reflection. He essays a major revision of the way in which the attributes are related directly to God's action, both economic action and eternal action. This book deserves much study and response. The absence of Gunton's future reflection and perfection of the essays here and in the other areas of his research will be much lamented.

—GREGORY A. WALTER
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Lost Soul of American Protestantism. By D. G. Hart. Rowman and Littlefield, 2002, xxxiv and 195 pp.

In *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, D. G. Hart succeeds in recovering a forgotten chapter of American religious history. Challenging the well known, two-dimensional rivalry between liberal proponents of the social gospel and revivalist, born-again evangelicals, Hart retells the story of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Protestantism to include a third, neglected group of Christian believers whom he identifies as "confessional

Protestants.” *Lost Soul* provocatively argues that these believers – represented today in part by Orthodox Presbyterians, Lutherans of the Missouri Synod and Christian Reformed Church members – lie outside the main current of American religion because of their reliance on historic confessions, liturgies, and creeds. In the same way that Mormons, African Americans, Roman Catholics, Jews, and Christian Scientists have been excluded from the country’s religious mainstream, confessing Protestants have been overlooked because the categories of “mainline” and “evangelical” are simply inadequate (xxix).

Hart explains the history of confessional Protestantism and its significance for American religion and society by differentiating it from the “liberal” and “evangelical” forms of Protestantism that have occupied the greater share of scholarly and (often divisive) media attention. He documents how these two rivals were actually cut from the same cloth of eighteenth-century European and American pietism. Promoted by two Great Awakenings, pietism’s emphasis on individual conversion, moral transformation, and public evangelism produced a “new form of Christian faith.” Its privileging of social and personal utility diametrically opposed confessionalists’ doctrinal priorities. Pietism’s success in creating a Protestant mainstream busy with temporal life – whether for conservative or progressive social ends – has abetted scholars’ neglect of more churchly traditions that, in defiance of the dominant religious culture, have focused on the world to come (xxiv). *Lost Soul* thus presents “a different perspective of American Protestantism and the way historians have told its story” by calling into question the sufficiency of “liberal,” “fundamentalist,” and “evangelical” categories (xxvi).

Chapter one traces pietism to George Whitefield’s trans-Atlantic revivals (1739-41). In contrast with pastors like Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield removed preaching from the formal church setting while offering conversion in everyday, emotional terms instead of theological and intellectual formulas. The new nation’s separation of church and state “played directly into the hands of the sort of religion that Whitefield had made successful”: disestablished churches competing for members through similar revivals and emphasizing individual experience at the expense of ecclesiastical traditions. On this foundation of individual decision and public commitment, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, and Billy Sunday built their own followings, contributing to a network of parachurch and reform institutions that created a civil religious empire (12). As a result, Christianity became a “religion to be practiced in the marketplace, the home, and the statehouse, not some-

thing to be confined to the church, under the control of the clergy" (20). Hart concludes that "[r]evivalism secured the victory of pietism, which in turn directed mainstream ... Protestantism, whether of a Social Gospel variety or an evangelistic stripe, away from the formal and corporate beliefs and practices of the church toward the informal settings and personal affairs of believers" (23).

Chapter two illustrates further the novel character of American pietism by showing how revivalism divided the fledgling eighteenth-century Presbyterian church into "Old" confessional and "New" pietistic sides. At stake was the definition of genuine religion, which confessionalists ultimately lost to the New Side's emphasis on the profession of personal conversion. The Lutheran church experienced similar tensions in the nineteenth century between the older generation of immigrants who had successfully assimilated to American pietistic ways and new arrivals who resisted fitting the "square peg of historical Lutheran faith and practice into the round hole of mainstream American revivalist Protestantism" (46).

In chapter three Hart analyzes the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversies of the 1920s and the rise of neo-orthodoxy throughout the 1950s to account for the ways that confessional Protestantism continued to slip through the cracks of American historiography. Though more like Roman Catholics in their emphases on ecclesiastical authority and sacraments, confessing Protestants became equated with "Fundamentalists," Christians with whom they often agreed in doctrine but widely differed in practice – particularly the Fundamentalists' willingness to support Prohibition and fight secularism in public schools. Unlike confessing Protestants, however, the fundamentalists and modernists did not limit religion to the private world of family devotions or worship services that communicated sacraments of grace and realities of the life to come. Rather, they wanted to influence present, public life: conservative Christians through individual, family, and church efforts to convert society one soul at a time; mainliners through legislation and government programs to improve and redeem society (57-9).

The fourth chapter most fully illustrates the virtues of confessional Protestantism with its portrait of J. Gresham Machen, the principle figure in the confessionals' 1930s departure from the increasingly liberal northern Presbyterian church. This chapter is doubly interesting for the way it ties together Hart's first book, *Defending the Faith* (1994), a detailed biography of Machen, with his more controversial study, *The University Gets Religion* (1999). It shows how confessional Protestants' creedal understanding of

Scripture kept them from the fatal error of William Jennings Bryan's attack against scientific modernism as well as from mainline Protestantism's identification with the modern university's nationalistic, cultural mandate. In the last two chapters Hart details the trials experienced by the Dutch Christian Reformed Church and the German Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in their attempts to remain true to their confessional, ethnic, and liturgical heritages against the assimilating pressures of American Protestantism.

In sum, Hart challenges the pietistic idea that "religion has immediate relevance to all walks of life" because it too often creates "simplistic formulas for grappling with deep-rooted problems or [contributes] to shrill national debates" (xxx). He offers confessional Protestantism's unique spirituality as an attractive alternative that transcends both the partisan politics and crass consumerism associated with the liberal and evangelical traditions. Hart's conclusions, however, cast doubt on his earlier disclaimers that the book does not merely identify pietism's faults nor imply that mainline and evangelical believers made no effort to hold on to parts of historic Protestantism (177, xxiii, xxix). In Hart's treatment, confessional Protestantism is the true heir of historic Protestantism; this is a book critical of both liberal and evangelical Christianity.

To its credit, *Lost Soul* interacts with the latest scholarship in religious studies, sociology, history, and ethnography in staking its claim for confessional Protestantism's place in American historiography. Hart presents an original, compelling argument that advances the study of religious history. Moreover, his critique of liberal Protestantism's false neutrality and presumption to represent America anticipates William Hutchison's argument in *Religious Pluralism in America* (2003) and helps explain the furor over the Ten Commandments display in Alabama. The correction of intermittent editorial mistakes and more fully crafted paragraphs could at times have made *Lost Soul* an easier read. These minor flaws, however, are outweighed by the originality and complexity of the religious, political, and social analysis that *Lost Soul* recovers for students of American history.

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Realism and Christian Faith: God, Grammar, and Meaning. By Andrew Moore. Cambridge University Press, 2003, xi and 269 pages.

Theological defenses of realism (i.e., the question whether there is a reality independent of the thinking human subject) more often than not are structured along philosophical lines. Given the constructivist elements of modern and postmodern epistemology (so the procedure goes), how is it possible to show that reality and God are independent of the synthetic-constructive work of the human knower? In this volume Andrew Moore, a Fellow of the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at Regent's Park College at Oxford University, proposes a more *theological* approach to realism. The overarching polemical horizon of his project is Christian anti-realism (e.g., Don Cupitt and Gordon Kaufman); such approaches, which consider the Christian God to be an imaginative construct, amount to forfeiture of Christian faith, Moore contends (112). Rather than basing his approach on theories of epistemic justification and the nature of rationality, Moore argues that "through their redemption in Christ human beings are granted to show the reality of the triune God" (x). In so doing he endeavors to show that when the question of realism is reframed *christocentrically*, and with attention to the unique *practices* that typify Christian faith, the problem presents itself in a wholly different form.

The first portion of the book offers a critique of "theological realism," an umbrella term under which Moore groups a variety of thinkers (e.g., Janet Martin Soskice, Arthur Peacocke, Ian Barbour, and Wentzel van Huyssteen) who are similar in (1) the fact that the independence of *God's* reality drives their defense of realism, (2) their use of analogies between theological and scientific realism, and (3) their generically theistic approach to the problem. Moore thinks that theological realism too blithely assumes that the God whose independent reality it is arguing for is identical with the God of the Bible; its real focus is on "the logical coherence of an abstract *concept* of God and her/his/its *attributes* from which biblical narrative conceptions have been almost totally eviscerated" (32-3). Following Barth and Jüngel, he insists that only certain ways of speaking about God (and therefore also defending realism) respect the fact that we are talking about *God* (rather than created reality). The engine of proper God-talk is, therefore, God's self-revelation in Christ. This approach entails constructing a transcendental argument on the basis of the "ontological commitment" that the triune God of Jesus Christ is *ens realissimum*, the "Most Real reality there is" (14). Doing

this seriously requires attention to the biblical narrative's connection between God's self-naming ("I am who I am"; "I will be who I will be") and salvific acts, which alone enables theology to avoid idolatry in its search for a proper realism.

Furthermore, Moore argues that the common theological realist tactic of employing analogies with scientific realism makes a "category mistake" by using the logic of science in Christian theology (40). When theological realism uses an analogy between the unobservability of God and the unobservability of theoretical entities in science to argue for a causal relationship between religious experiences and the unobservable God, it ends up employing the grammar of created things to describe God the Creator. This approach attempts to justify theology's putative reference to a real God by appeal to the experiences of believers. This strategy leads Moore to suspect that theological realism (despite its own efforts to the contrary) remains locked in an empiricist frame of reference. Moore considers such arguments on the basis of religious experience to be less than compelling, because religious experience could be explained by other (non-realist) explanations (e.g., naturalism).

While theological realism ignores the specific grammar of Christian faith, Moore argues that such grammar is a necessary presupposition of rightly understanding what *kind* of realist account is proper to describe language and meaning regarding the Christian God. So he enters into recent discussions of Christian theology as a "grammar" that is present in the practices of those in the Christian church. In dialogue with Wittgenstein, D.Z. Phillips, and George Lindbeck, Moore argues that in and of themselves Christian practices are an insufficient guide to the reality of God because they so often reflect disobedience. God's reality can be present in our practices, but not obviously and automatically so. Christian practices lose their meaning when they are detached from the (biblical) narrative that must inform them (114-15). Practices that truly represent God (and God's independent reality) depend on the narrative recital of God's actions, and the very actions that are recited. When the Holy Spirit acts through this recital God can be present in these practices.

All of this means, constructively, that an authentically Christian account of realism must work from the *Christian* notion of God—namely, that God is *ens realissimum* as the triune God revealed in Christ. The crucial issue for Moore is thus not the manner in which humans can gain epistemic

access to God, but the moral and ontological standing of humanity before God. Through the *imago Dei*, humanity is graciously allowed to represent God, but humanity sinfully tends to deny God's independent reality (seen most acutely in the crucifixion of Jesus). God's independent reality is not shown by epistemological argumentation, but by God's own act of resurrecting Jesus, whom human beings had put to death, implicitly denying the independent reality of the Father of Jesus. Christian realism is a reflection of the independent and prevenient reality of God that is revealed in the resurrection. This account means that Christians can only "have" reality (in a realist sense) under this salvation-historical narrative description (214). This narrative's meaning lies not in the text itself, but in the activity of God to which it points, just as Christian practices are meaningless apart from the acts of God that regulate them. The Bible and Christian practices have the effect of decentering the church and Christian believers, and focusing them on the triune God, rather than upon themselves or the text. Only as thus decentered are Christians enabled (in grace) to show through their lives and words the independent reality of God.

These are the basic lines of Moore's proposal (which includes, among other things, a "dialectical fideist" account of the relationship between theology and philosophy and a foray into speech act theory). Moore's proposal of a distinctively Christian realism is a welcome departure from those approaches that trade on the distinctive elements of Christian theology in order to play by the rules of the philosophical game. His strategy in doing so, however, may strike some readers as leading to a problematic question-begging. His approach is so theological that some will wonder if he is even addressing the same question of realism. For example, when he calls (on theological grounds) for an ontological approach rather than an epistemological approach, is he not putting the proverbial cart before the horse? How is it possible to speak of the being of God (independent or otherwise) apart from the epistemological conditions and constraints under which human minds must labor?

Moore might agree that such questions are legitimate, *if* one is assuming the rules of the realist game as usual, but that such an approach is nevertheless not distinctively Christian. But more than starting from an ontological approach, Moore is proposing a different epistemology, one indebted to Karl Barth's construal of God's self-revelation, which coheres with the character of God. It is an epistemology in which the conditions of knowledge rest with God rather than with human beings. It is an account that refuses to

detach epistemology from soteriology, and therefore refuses to start anywhere but the prevenient (and therefore *real*) grace of God. This methodological divergence, however, does cause Moore to underemphasize aspects of theological realism that are actually amenable to his own approach, such as the fallibilism of Soskice's account of theological language that Moore criticizes as too generally epistemological, even though he proposes a similar fallibilism on the basis of the doctrine of sin.

Although some readers will undoubtedly find this book problematic and perhaps unhelpful in showing the relationship of theology to the other academic disciplines, Moore shows that merely philosophical approaches are bound to be theologically inadequate. His approach perhaps even points toward a more authentic sense of theology's relationship to the other disciplines, one that resides in its uniqueness and its realization that it must first serve God and the church, as Barth never ceased to emphasize. As theology faithfully does that, it will also contribute more powerfully to the various problematics of the world, including philosophy and its desire to determine the extent to which human language actually makes contact with reality.

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